

Take a Letter, Please!

*A CYCLOPEDIA OF BUSINESS
AND SOCIAL CORRESPONDENCE*

By
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Author of

"Get It Right!," "Don't Say It,"

"Say What You Mean,"

"Opdycke Lexicon," etc.



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To

T. H.

LETTER WRITING—

especially business letter writing—is neither an exact science nor a finished art. It is impossible, therefore, to submit letters in a book of this kind that will be unanimously approved, or to comment upon them with assurance. A letter thought by one person to be excellent may be thought by another to be only fair or, perhaps, bad. A letter that proves itself a success in one relationship may prove a failure in another. All the business houses that have so kindly permitted use of their letters in the following pages have, in doing so, emphasized the fact that these letters are not to be taken as finality in either style or content, that, in other words, methods in business correspondence change as seasons pass, and that there cannot be—luckily—any such thing as a business letter that is good for all time or for even a short time.

The friendly or social letters included here are only such as have been accepted by sound editorial judgment as worthy of retention in English literature. The business letters are letters that have served well the purposes for which they were originally intended. These two grand divisions of letter writing are treated in parallel (for the first time?) because the author believes that each has much to learn from the other, that the two, indeed, are but different faces or manifestations of the same fundamental composition purpose, namely, to talk thru the medium of pen, paper, and ink to those who are absent. In illustrative proof of this thesis the author has correlated a few business letters with every section devoted to friendly letters; a few friendly letters with every section devoted to business letters.

The book contains no detailed treatment of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other mechanics of writing. The author's *Get It Right!* is recommended as a companion volume in all cases where need is felt for guidance in these subjects. In the reproduction of most of the letters the body only is given inasmuch as

this is the part calculated to meet the problems of composition. For every letter, however, the reader should frame in his imagination the complete letter picture as explained and illustrated in Chapter Three. In many of the friendly or social letters, especially those of the earlier centuries, headings and closings and other formal parts are sometimes incompletely provided in originals. For this reason it has been thought better to give only the body of these also except where there is some unique departure from conventional form in the minor parts. Dates and other circumstances of individual writings are included in the italicized introductions in all cases where they have been procurable. It should be noted that, owing to the exigencies of the printed page, the short letters reproduced in type are frequently "out of shape." The artistic placement and proportioning of a letter on the letter sheet—particularly of a short letter—require that the completed letter picture be longer than wide—a vertical oblong, as on pages 72 and 217. The reader must again permit his imagination to correct this unavoidable defection.

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Personal names and names of business firms used in the illustrative matter of this book are entirely fictitious, except, of course, in the case of literary letters and in those cases where permission has been especially secured and authorization accredited.

J. B. O.

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PART ONE

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

CHAPTER ONE

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

What makes a letter alive? What makes a letter breathe and pulsate? What makes us read a letter again and again, even though we understand it perfectly the first time we read it? What is it in a letter that can set the home or the office agog? What is it in the superior letter that marks it off from the average, that impresses and moves and stirs its reader, and effectuates its message? The collective answer is *personality*—that enviable, inexplicable quality of individual as of house that constitutes distinction and preeminence.

When Sir William Temple's letters were first printed, in 1757, the publisher, in a quaint prefatory epistle to the reader, said: "Nothing is so capable of giving a true account of story as letters are; for they relate actions while they are alive and breathing, whereas all other relations are of actions past and dead. So as it hath been observed that the epistles of Cicero to Atticus give a better account of those times, than is to be found in any other writing"

A half dozen years earlier—August 31, 1751—Dr. Samuel Johnson had devoted a whole number of *The Rambler* to a discussion of letters and letter writing, in which he pondered, among other related subjects, the question of balancing gaiety or aliveness with civility or propriety in epistolary composition.

Both of these writers were "moderns." Their alertness regarding the problem of making letters fresh and pulsating without offending, proves that they were. That problem is by no means completely solved even yet; probably it never can be. Its solution depends upon the transference of the letter-writer's personality—or certain elements of it—to paper, and this would be difficult even if that subtle and elusive quality known as personality were clearly understood and easily definable.

The clear and concise conveyance of a message, the observance of sound letter-writing principles, the nothing-is-too-much-trouble attitude—these are all most important in letter composition, and they are all achievable by any normal person who will study and practice. But these alone will not necessarily make a letter alive and breathing, will not endow it with personality. On the contrary, meticulous compliance with rule and regulation in letter writing has been known to leave a letter faultily faultless and splendidly null, just as a perfectly groomed and studiously mannered person has been known to convey somewhat less personality than a robot or a corpse.

All men and women cannot, of course, be possessed of marked ingratiating personality. But everybody can do something toward developing and cultivating those personal qualities that are certain to leave favorable rather than unfavorable impression, that insinuate agreeable rather than disagreeable attitudes and qualities. Just so, everybody cannot write memorable or momentous letters, but intelligent men and women can cultivate at least an acceptable if not an engaging style in the gentlest art. To this end it is no more possible to lay down rigid rule and regulation than it is to issue a code for the attainment of personality. But these will do much:

- 1 Omnivorous reading in general literature, especially in the literature of letters¹

- 2 Indefatigable practice in all sorts of real and imaginary letter situations

Improvement in the quality of letter composition has been hindered by the widespread and promiscuous publication of poor and mediocre letters, of letters that contribute something perhaps to social or historical or economic knowledge but nothing whatever to standards of expression. Ever since the first publication of letters in English early in the seventeenth century by Bishop Joseph Hall (see page 10), lack of discernment and discrimination in selection has characterized their output. Today the life *and* letters of all too many persons—prominent or otherwise—get into print merely as a matter of completing a record, with little or no judicious sifting brought to bear. Rarely should *all* of anybody's letters be laid open to the public. The best should be, short of strictly confidential ones, of course. Even the most cautious and engaging of letter writers must have his lapses, must now and again write a letter that is "nobody's business" but his own and his addressee's.

¹See *The Literature of Letters* by the same author.

must occasionally write something that is unworthy. The notorious exchange between Edward Fitz-Gerald and Robert Browning is a lamentable case in point.

A letter that serves a definite purpose and delivers a worthwhile message, that commits no breach of confidence and reveals no pettiness of attitude or opinion, no violation of good taste, no undignified display of temper, may without objection be published to the public. But a letter that gives the impression that its author may, on second thought, regret its having been written and mailed is one that should be mercifully spared by editors and publishers. The considerate attitude on the part of the recipient of such a letter is to destroy it or return it to the writer for him to destroy.

Perhaps the attitude of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), as revealed in the following letter, illustrates concretely the gentlemanly treatment of an "impassioned epistle" (see also page 20). It was written to John P. Kemble, Sheridan's manager at the Drury Lane Theatre. Kemble, annoyed at Sheridan's shiftless and indifferent behavior, felt himself forced to leave the management of the theater as result of it, but he did not do so without "airing his feelings" in a letter to which Sheridan replied as follows:

If I had not a very good opinion of your principles and intentions upon all subjects, and a very bad opinion of your nerves and philosophy upon some, I should take very ill indeed, the letter I received from you this evening.

That the management of the theatre is a situation capable of becoming troublesome is information which I do not want, and a discovery which I thought you had made long ago.

I should be very sorry to write to you gravely on your offer, because I must consider it as a nervous flight, which it would be as unfriendly in me to notice seriously as it would be in you seriously to have made it.

What I *am* most serious in is a determination that, while the theatre is indebted, and others, for it and for me, are so involved and pressed as they are, I will exert myself, and give every attention and judgment in my power to the establishment of its interests. In you I hoped, and do hope, to find an assistant, on principles of liberal and friendly confidence—I mean confidence that should be above touchiness and reserve, and that should trust to me to estimate the value of that assistance.

If there is anything amiss in your mind not arising from the *troublesomeness* of your situation, it is childish and unmanly not to disclose it to me. The frankness with which I have always dealt towards you entitles me to expect that you should have done so.

But I have no reason to believe this to be the case; and, attributing your letter to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged, I prescribe that you shall keep your appointment at the Piazza Coffee-house, tomorrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it.

Just as novelists read novels, dramatists dramas, essayists essays, poets poems, and so on, so those who are ambitious to write personality letters must read widely in the literature of letters. George Eliot said that she wrote a letter a day, just to "keep her hand in." It is equally important practice for one to read a personality letter a day if he would keep his hand in. And this dictum holds for business letter writers just as pointedly as for writers of so-called social or friendly letters. The best business letters are and must needs be friendly in tone and quality. Many of the best friendly letters in literature treat of business subjects, among others. The line of demarcation between the business letter *per se* and the friendly letter has heretofore been too sharply drawn by both teachers and textbooks. The literary letters reproduced in this book almost invariably treat in part if not *in toto* of business interests.

CLASSIFICATION

This chapter contains almost one hundred such letters. A few strictly business letters are included chiefly for the purpose of showing the kinship between the composition of friendly letters and that of commercial letters. The categories or classifications are purely arbitrary. Any attempt to classify letters rigidly must always fail. They are too individual, if they are worth consideration at all, to be grouped under anything more than loose and approximate headings. And this is true even of the two grand divisions of friendly letters and business letters, for they are frequently one and the same, or nearly so. But it is convenient to talk about this kind and that kind of letter. As a matter of fact there are or ought to be as many kinds of letters as there are letter subjects or letter writers. The subject-matter of letters is as broad and varied as are the processes of human thought and activity, and the method of epistolary treatment is as diversified as are the manifestations of human personalities. Letters are well-nigh universal in scope of subject and in style. The covers of a mere book can grasp but comparatively few types.

The aim in the following departmentalized exposition is simply to make the student aware of the extreme importance *to him* of

ransacking the corners of the library—of unearthing and studying letters in all periods of literary history and on all subjects under the sun—in the sincere effort to improve his own letter composition. While all of the letters here included may properly be called personality letters (except those, of course, explicitly designated otherwise) they are not of equally impressive appeal—could not be so, any more than all human beings could possibly evince the same degree of personality quality. Moreover, here as elsewhere, one's love may be another's hate, tho differences of opinion are likely to be subjective rather than objective. In comparison with all the good letters there are in the world to consult, those below are few indeed, but they represent wide variety of style and treatment. When Matthew Arnold was requested to select for publication those of his letters that he considered best, he said that he wanted to select them all. The greatest difficulty in assembling the letters in the following pages has been the difficulty of rejection, and this must always be the case in the embarrassingly rich field of epistolary literature. Inasmuch as in all worthwhile letters the tone must be friendly, it is the subject-matter that decides the classification of a letter into one of the two large groups—friendly and business. Hence, in the groups of friendly letters in this book will be found some business letters, and vice versa. The carry-over quality of style from the one to the other is or should be constant, just as very often the subject-matter is exactly the same.

The friendly letter, by which is meant any letter written in informal conversational or chatty style from one friend to another, should constitute a fair index of the character and personality of the one who writes it. The letters of the great in literature and history and art, and other fields, to their friends, prove just this. They also throw much valuable light upon the times in which their writers lived. Such letters have always been most important documents in reconstructing historical periods authentically.

There is hardly any limit upon the liberties that may be taken in friendly letters by way of ignoring the conventions explained on pages 231 to 265. The college lad may write, sans heading, sans closing, sans everything but the actual message itself,

Dear Dad

SOS

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

RSVP

PDQ

Sonny Boy

And to the informal invitation: "Will you dine with me on Thursday?" even a Lady Dufferin may reply: "Won't I?"

It is the understandable tone that constitutes the be-all and the end-all of friendly correspondence. While exactness of form may be by no means so important here as in business correspondence, certain rules of organization should nevertheless be observed. Merely as a matter of safety, the friendly letter should always contain complete heading and inside address. So much precision is wise in order to facilitate the return or the forwarding of a letter that may accidentally be lost from its envelope. But this rule is by no means always observed in friendly letters, as witness any good collection. Moreover, the departure from rule in letters that combine business with friendly affairs often results in interesting substitutions. These may be valuable in that they show how personal characteristics may be brought to bear upon business details and how even the great of bygone days have recognized the importance of writing engagingly about such subjects.

The beautiful letters of long ago are no more, it is frequently lamented, for the very evident and sufficient reasons that the busy-ness of modern life prevents their being written, and that the telegraph and telephone and the radio have made them archaic. Also, in increasing numbers there are those persons who advise against replying to letters inasmuch as all letters get themselves answered eventually by the march of events!

But there are more letters written today—if not more good ones—than ever before. Inventive genius has accelerated letter output just as it has quickened the pace of work in other fields. Improvement in the quality of letter composition has by no means, however, been proportionate to its quantitative production. Some progress has been made, of course, during the past quarter of a century owing to the better-letter movement. But the quality of letter composition, both business and friendly, leaves much to be desired today. Taste, discretion, common sense, correct English are still unfortunately lacking in all too many letters that find their way thru the mails. The old beg-to-say clichés are disappearing. At least, it is in regard to these that perhaps the greatest improvement in letter composition has recently been made. They can never be abandoned altogether, nor is it desirable that they should be, for all human speech tends to retain some hackneyed expressions. It must do so by token of the very repetition or routine of living habits. Moreover, a

modicum of such terms yields a "homey" and familiar ring to conversation, and it cannot be said too often that letters are or should be nothing more—surely nothing less—than just good conversation.

Letters—both business and friendly—are still powerful. More things are wrought by them than this world dreams of. Written to a public official or to a newspaper, their collective influence in a given cause remains today, as formerly, incalculable. Epistolary bombardment is now and has for centuries been the most irrefutable concrete proof that the pen may be made mightier than the sword.

Business letter composition must be somewhat more tightly drawn than friendly letter composition. It must be clear, concise, correct, and dignified. It must be nicely adapted to the uses made of it. The musician expresses himself in terms of tone, movement, beat, melody, harmony, scale, minor or major key, and the like. The doctor employs such terms as temperature, pulse, fever, diet, mastication, tonic, metabolism, digestion, physis, congestion. The electrician talks of volts, watts, ohms, currents, charge, positive, negative, insulation, meter, and so forth. And the business man uses turnover overhead, profit, loss, balance, ledger, delivery, sales, clerk, credit, debit, collection, adjustment, per cent, and hundreds of other terms particular to his pursuit.

Since business is a very general activity, most people being engaged in business in one way or another, the language that belongs to it is widely used and deserves some consideration on the part of those who study English speaking and writing. There could be no better training for them in attaining to expression that is crisp, strong, and specific. For business expression *must* be kept brief and pointed; other expression should be, but often is not, and little may be lost as a consequence. So much depends in business dealings upon saying exactly what one has to say, no more and no less, that training in business speech and writing should be made training in directness and forthrightness of conduct and manner. Loose expression pertaining to business may have serious results—much more serious results than loose expression in other channels of speaking and writing.

Sentences and paragraphs in business expression are as a rule shorter than in other composition. Every sentence and every paragraph should be made to *achieve* something. There can be

no accidental notes, as in music; there can be no entertaining experiment, as in the laboratory; there can be no decorative lighting, as in electrical exhibitions. Ideally, every syllable and every punctuation mark must be made to count definitely toward the accomplishment of a desired end.

The first excerpt below is not well adapted to the requirements of business expression. It is extravagant and elaborate. The second one is suitable for business use. It is direct and economical. And in this comparative illustration lies the principal difference between business writing and general writing. The unbusinesslike excerpt is taken from a weekly review for general reading. The second is adapted to the columns of a business weekly.

Though the depression has now achieved a literature which begins to rival that of the World War, few of the books about it have been widely read. The reasons for this are perhaps not difficult to understand. The course of events in the last three years has changed so rapidly that it has been difficult for contemporary interpretations to keep pace with new developments. Moreover, the conflict with which this literature deals is essentially impersonal. There are no heroes and no villains in the slow, ruinous decline of commodity prices and the inexorable contraction of bank credit. There are scapegoats. But it is less easy to feel certain that any one of them brought about the depression single-handedly than that the Kaiser brought about the war, and more difficult to make economics interesting to a large audience, even in a period of misfortune, than to dramatize diplomacy and battle.

(150 words)

Books about the depression are becoming as numerous as those about the World War. Few of them, however, are widely read. Events have moved too rapidly for interpretation to keep abreast. Depression is less personal than war. It has scapegoats but they are not individualized. Economics is not good theater.

(50 words)

Business expression is primarily objective, that is, it is directed specifically to "the other fellow," to some one beyond the mind of the writer or speaker. It is *you*-directed. Sometimes, however, a writer or a speaker must use the subjective attitude, but he must never do it aggressively or conceitedly or otherwise objectionably. Toned in any sort of expression is of the utmost importance, but especially so in business speaking and writing. A high tone, a dignified tone, a polite tone, a tolerant tone, an understanding tone, a genial tone—all these are to be cultivated by him who would talk and write to men and women in business. Any manifestation of smartness, flippancy, irritability, brusque-

ness, superiority, weakness, vacillation, unreliability, inertia, triteness, is certain to defeat.

It is frequently said that a business letter should never treat of more than one subject. This good rule is sourced in the principle of concentration, and this in turn means unity of expression. But if it were applied to friendly letters it would take from them in most cases that delightfully intimate and gossipy quality that makes them such engaging reading. It is, of course, wise in writing and speaking of any kind to concentrate upon one subject at a time, and it is especially wise in business expression for the reason above given, namely, the consequences of a business message that is not unified or concentrated may be very serious. If it is weakened by diffuseness and incoherence it will not only mis-convey meaning but it may also convey actually wrong meaning. There is another reason for the rule: Many business establishments are highly departmentalized; letters have to be routed to those departments to which they belong; it is obviously awkward to route a letter that has something in it for the consideration of two or three departments.

But like most rules, this one has logical exceptions. A letter that the writer is certain will go to one person and one person only, may be written *seriatim* about two or more subjects. An applicant for a position would not write one letter telling about his education, another about his experience, another about the salary he wishes, and so on. It very often happens that two or more subjects may be perfectly well handled in one letter. But the letter situation in each individual case must be the deciding factor.

Which came first, the business or the friendly letter, cannot be decided with finality. The following is sometimes set down as the first letter (circa B. C. 1035). David wrote to Job

Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle,
and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten,
and die.

II Samuel 11:14-15

The message was sent by Uriah himself who, tho he didn't know it, was more or less concerned. It cannot, therefore, be called the first *friendly* letter for it was most *unfriendly*. Perhaps it had better be classed as the first business letter, for, like most other letters in the Old Testament, it is short, succinct, correct, concise, concrete, coherent, complete—and it certainly meant business.

Tho it may be regarded as heresy to say so, the starting point, then, for the student of business letter writing may well be the study of the best friendly letters to be found in general literature. Later he will, of course, be obliged to make such departure from them in his letter-writing practice as his special interests dictate. It is in the best friendly letters that he will most clearly and agreeably learn the very important principle of all kinds of letter writing, namely, that the good letter is good conversation set down on paper. Bishop Hall, in the work above referred to, prophesied even in his time "a new fashion of discourse by epistles, new to our language, usual to all others, and, so as novelty is never without plea of use, more free, more familiar. *Thus we do but talk with our friends by our pen, and express ourselves no whit less easily, somewhat more digestedly.*"

By no means all authoritative letters that pertain to letter writing can be included in this book, but the following by James Howell (1595-1666), another of the few early collectors and writers of good letters, cannot logically be omitted where familiar conversational style is discussed. In the compilation of a collection of letters Howell contests place for precedence with Bishop Hall (see page 2). He issued what is sometimes called the first literary collection of letters in English—letters that were really literary. He called his book *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae—Familiar Letters*. It consisted chiefly of letters written to imaginary correspondents during the author's imprisonment in Fleet Street jail. This letter is dated July 25, 1625, at Westminster, and is addressed to Sir J. S. at Leeds Castle:

It was a quaint difference the ancients did put betwixt a letter and an oration; that the one should be attired like a woman, the other like a man; the latter of the two is allowed large side robes, as long periods, parentheses, similes, examples, and other parts of rhetorical flourishes; but a letter or epistle should be short-coated and closely couched; a hungerlin becomes a letter more handsomely than a gown; indeed we should write as we speak; and that's a true familiar letter which expresseth one's mind, as if he were discoursing with the party to whom he writes, in succinct and short terms. The tongue and the pen are both of them interpreters of the mind; but I hold the pen to be the more faithful of the two. The tongue *in udo posita*, being seated in a moist slippery place, may fail and falter in her sudden extemporal expressions; but the pen having a greater advantage of premeditation, is not so subject to error, and leaves things behind it upon firm and authentic record.

Now letters, though they be capable of any subject, yet commonly they are either narratory, objurgatory, consolatory, monitory, or congratulatory. The first consists of relations, the second of reprehensions, the third of comfort, the two last of counsel and joy; there

are some who in lieu of letters write homilies; they preach when they should epistolize; there are others that turn them to tedious tractates: this is to make letters degenerate from their true nature.

Some modern authors there are who have exposed their letters to the world, but most of them, I mean among your Latin epistolizers, go freighted with mere Bartholomew ware, with trite and trivial phrases only, lifted with pedantic shreds of school-boy verses. Others there are among our next transmarine neighbours eastward, who write in their own language, but their style is so soft and easy, that their letters may be said to be like bodies of loose flesh without sinews, they have neither joints of art nor arteries in them; they have a kind of simpering and lank hectic expressions, made up of a bombast of words and finical affected compliments only. I cannot well away with such sleazy stuff. with such cobweb-compositions, where there is no strength of matter, nothing for the reader to carry away with him that may enlarge the notions of his soul. One shall hardly find an apophthegm, example, simile, or any thing of philosophy, history, or solid knowledge, or as much as one new created phrase in a hundred of them; and to draw any observations out of them, were as if one went about to distil cream out of froth; insomuch that it may be said of them, what was said of the Echo, "that she's a mere sound and nothing else."

I return you your Balzac by this bearer: and when I found those letters wherein he is so familiar with his King, so flat; and those to Richelieu so puffed with prophane hyperboles and larded up and down with such gross flatteries, I forebore him further. So I am your most affectionate servitor,

But if the student of business letter writing is certain to find much of value for his guidance in friendly letters, he is certain also to find something in them to avoid. The major quality of style of friendly letters is or should be ease. The major quality of style of business letters is precision. These are to a large extent contradictory qualities. Ease is usually acquired by throwing staid conventions to the dogs in order to be intimate, chatty, meandering, disconnected, incoherent—anything and everything but precise and businesslike. The friendly letter is what is sometimes called running conversation. Its very engagingness derives in its running on and on, just as natural exchange of conversation takes up and drops topic after topic in "gracious garrulity" and "vivacious verbosity." The delightful letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Madame de Sévigné so richly prove this. And just in proportion as a friendly letter fails in these qualities, is it likely to become stale, flat, and unprofitable.

But chat and incoherence and meandering will never, never do in the business letter. It should be kept conversational in style,

but somewhat more formally so. It should have the quality of ease, but this must never be permitted to mean looseness. Business letters are rarely written at leisure or as a recreation, as friendly letters are. They have to be "got out"; they are part of the day's routine; correspondence must be "cleaned off" the desk. The consequence is that they tend to go to the opposite extreme of friendly letter style, and become stereotyped and cliché (see page 111). Pressure of time makes for haste in their production, and this in turn unconsciously induces "frozen phraseology."

The second part of the term *letter writing* is thus seen to be a misnomer to a large extent. Letter *talking* is better, and it is this term that should always be kept in mind by the writer. Let him always remember that he is just talking, and that he is setting his talk down in black and white only because geography makes it necessary to do so. It is a good thing for a business man to say to his stenographer, "Now, please, I want to talk to Mr. — for a few minutes about the price of our gasoline engines." This may beget the conversational mood—the interview spirit—and make living, breathing, personality letters more easily possible. In a few years, indeed, he may be able to concretize a letter situation by turning on a television attachment to his dictation machine and thus talk face to face with his addressee. This should go a long way toward making his letters PLUS rather than MINUS, no matter to whom written, no matter how delicate or how irksome their subjects.

ILLUSTRATION

A student engaged in writing a thesis on a commercial subject addressed a courteous letter to two prominent business houses in his community, asking for a little help in his work. One house answered him thus:

We wish we could help you in this interesting undertaking of yours, and perhaps we may be able to do so later.

The one member of our firm best qualified to assist is now in Europe. He will return within the month, and we shall put him in touch with you just as soon as he arrives.

In the meantime why don't you address Hutchinson, Brown, and Company, 374 Pierson Avenue? They, too, have had some experience with the sort of enterprise you are studying.

The other house replied as follows:

Regret to say that we cannot be of assistance in the work you mention in your favor of 18 inst.

The former is a quick, alive, alert, cooperative, and conversational message. The latter is a dead letter; it says nothing and worse than nothing, and it does so in a curt and impolite manner. It has no survival value. It constitutes unearned detriment rather than unearned increment. It is minus rather than plus. It represents waste of effort, of postage, and of stationery.

The three following letters represent mere compliance with the give-and-take letter situation, and are little more than feed for the file, that merited morgue for lifeless letters that rarely enjoy resurrection. Dead letters are written—as would be expected—in the language of cliché (see page 111) with a free sprinkling of incorrect grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, and so forth. These three notes may be said to be “conspicuously and pre-eminently dead”:

Yours of the 15 inst. at hand and contents duly noted.

In reply would say that your opinion in the matter will be given very careful consideration.

Permit me to state that your application is received.

Regret to report that there is no opening at present time, but your letter will be kept on file for future reference.

In reply to your esteemed favor of 2nd. ult. beg to say that we greatly appreciate your interest in the matter of which you wrote, and that we shall keep your letter in our files for consideration at such time in the future as we may have occasion to require it.

It is the letter—or the figuring—that kills in many business communications, especially those sometimes written by financial companies. Complication or befuddlement is not the word for it. “I guess I’ll cancel that there policy, Mary Ann,” said Farmer Korn Tossel to his wife, “ ’cause I haint never had the advantages of higher ’rithmetic and I jest can’t make the goshdurned thing out!” This dead letter justified his discouragement: ²

* Used by permission of *The New Yorker*.

RE: POLICY #3,543,164—ON YOUR LIFE

With reference to your recent request for a change to the Twenty Payment Life plan under your above numbered policy we wish to say that the change has been approved. Before proceeding with the change, however, we must ask you to remit \$2.88 to Mr. Alfred Ames, our metropolitan cashier, at 301 Lenox Avenue, New York City.

In our adjustment under the change we have allowed you \$495.75 which represents the difference in cash values between the Fifteen Year Endowment plan and the Twenty Payment Life plan. We have credited you with the deposit of \$7.06 made on account of extension of the premium to March 30, 1936. A charge of \$498.30 has been made to reduce the outstanding loan of \$687.21 to \$190.26, the maximum loan value of the new policy, and to pay 129 days' interest of \$10.35 on the part of the loan repaid. We have charged you the quarterly premium of \$7.25 on the Twenty Payment Life basis due January 30, 1936, plus \$0.14 which amount is required to extend the Ac3 and D5 features from January 30, 1936, to March 2, 1936. The various charges aggregate \$505.69; the allowance of \$495.75 plus the deposit of \$7.06 equals \$502.81. The difference between \$505.69 and \$502.81 is \$2.88, the amount we have asked you to remit to our metropolitan cashier.

Your policy and request for change will be held in our Suspense File pending payment of the required amount to our metropolitan cashier.

The following claim letter is written in such ironic vein as to invite the wrong sort of reply. In spite of great provocation, the claimant would have done better to "complain cheerfully."

For the fifth time permit me to tell you that I am Mr. Harold Bronson, not Mrs., as you have been addressing me for the past six months. Your persistence in making this error certainly evinces a very lax supervision of employees and their work.

For the third time I am obliged to call your attention to the fact that my address is 324 Haverill Avenue, *not* Haverill Street, as you have insisted upon having it in your communications to me for the past four months. Exactness in writing names and places should be made of first importance, I should think, in any business that has to do with financial dealings.

Your masterpieces in error, however, seem to be made in connection with the computation and addition of interest to my monthly statements. In March and April you failed to add it in at all. In May you computed it incorrectly. I wrote you on the receipt of each monthly statement, but to no avail evidently, for along comes my statement in June with the interest incorrectly computed again. And the March and April interest computations are still behind!

I should think your looseness in conducting your business would invite people to close accounts with you. It invites me to do so, and I accept the invitation.

Is it any wonder that the bank sent him the following dead adjustment?

Thank you for calling our attention to the errors made by this bank in connection with your account.

We are correcting your name and address in our files, as per your request, and enclosing corrected statements for the months mentioned in your letter.

We trust that you will not have occasion again to express dissatisfaction with the service that we are rendering.

This is the live adjustment he might have received had his claim been somewhat more tactfully phrased.

You are entirely right, Mr. Bronson, in writing us as you have done. Indeed, you have been more than patient with us, and we could not blame you at all were you to withdraw your account and sever all relations with our bank. We could not blame you—but we should be extremely sorry if you did so. Please reconsider your “acceptance of the invitation” and give us just one more trial?

Serious and annoying as these errors have been to you, Mr. Bronson, we nevertheless feel that even they should not be permitted to break up a relationship that has been continuous for three generations of the Bronson family. You have too much at stake with us, and we with you. Your interests have been identified with our own for so long a time that any breach at this late day would be little short of a calamity for both of us. You are substantially written in six different departments of this bank—investment, foreign, loan, savings, trust, and depository. This has meant a great deal to us. We believe that the relationship has meant a little something to you.

Mistakes will happen even among friends, even in the most meticulous of business institutions, such as banks. Your name and address have now been indelibly corrected, we think, and checked in every department. You may see them, stamped in gold, on the flexible leather checkbook that we enclose. This checkbook, by the way, is something new under the sun: It contains one hundred blank checks, six tabulated pages for securities records, and a section for day-by-day income tax calculations. Please accept this with our compliments, and when you desire more of the same kindly let us know.

Enclosed also are corrected statements of your running account for March, April, May, and June, with interest at current rate compounded. There is positively no excuse for such serial error as this. We are extremely embarrassed and humbled by it. The next time that you are in our neighborhood we hope that you will come in to see us so that we may, among other things, express to you personally our regrets and our apologies.

The following letters illustrate what may be done by a good correspondent to handle a difficult situation. The history of the

case as courteously contributed to this book by the company concerned, is, briefly, as follows:

An order was received from this customer, calling for a belt which was to have certain holes punched in it before it left the factory. We shipped the belt and billed the customer for it. Then we discovered that we had not billed him for punching the holes, so an invoice was sent to him to cover the labor of punching.

Now, as a matter of fact, the belt had been shipped without the holes being punched, so you can see that he was pretty well stirred up when he received the invoice for something we had not done. The correspondent who handled the case had never seen or heard of the customer. All he had to go on was the claim letter itself. He studied that carefully and decided that a very informal, in fact, an almost colloquial reply would be the best to use. The incident happened after the football game referred to, so this was used as an illustration.

The letter not only did the job and retained the customer, but the correspondent later found out that the man is quite a lover of sports; so you see he hit the nail on the head, by carefully studying the letter in order to determine the type of man who wrote it and, consequently, the type of reply that would appease him.

I answer your letter of May 17, with invoice of May 11, in which you say, "Our original invoice was *incorrectly* billed inasmuch as the charge for punching 574 holes was *omitted*." At one cent per hole\$5.74.

How do you get that way? *OMITTED IS RIGHT*. It was the *holes you omitted*.

See Mr.'s letter of March 28 saying he understood from the template just how the holes were to be punched. All was well and we felt satisfied. Try to imagine what happened. We were all set to install this belt at night, inasmuch as it was delayed in arriving. It came late one afternoon—the writer was at dinner. At six p.m. the phone rang and I was told they could not put the belt on, because there were no holes punched for the bolts. Oh Boy, it sure did spoil a good evening for the writer, and you cannot imagine all that was said about the Company and the branch. The writer finally located the hardware man, and we went to his store and bought all the belt punches he had. Then we worked until one-thirty a.m. getting these holes punched. And after all this, to have a bill from you at this time for *OMITTING* punching! You have the *omitted* in the wrong place. It will be a long time before we forget about it. No, we did not write you. We wrote you two letters, but they were not fit to go through the mail, so we destroyed them and forgot the matter until your letter and invoice were received in today's mail. Now, since you've started the ball rolling, enclosed find our invoice for labor installing holes which *YOU OMITTED*. The writer has made no charge for his time—the lost evening was charged up to profit and experience—"more experience than profit."

Mr.—do you know any more good jokes?

Your letter of May 20 is appreciated, although it tells us of a condition for which we have no excuse, but can only offer our apologies.

The mistake you mentioned is so ridiculous that it would indeed be funny had it not caused you such a serious upset. Of course our invoice of 5/11 is entirely out of order and you are quite right in billing us as you did on May 20 for the labor involved in doing what we should have done. You may rest assured our invoice will be canceled and yours allowed.

This thing came about as a result of one of those plain, damn-fool mistakes that human beings will occasionally make. You probably remember that in the Georgia School of Technology-University of California football game last season, Riegels picked up the ball and actually carried it for many yards toward the *wrong* goal thereby losing the game for California. They said he was in a dazed condition but you will probably remember he was able to run pretty fast; so I think this is a good illustration of what a crazy blunder persons will sometimes make.

Riegels has heard plenty as a result of this fluke and you can just bet that the man in our plant who failed to punch these holes has been talked to plenty for his blunder. We are not firing him because another fellow might do the same thing, and we feel sure this man will profit by his mistake and contribute his share toward good service in the future.

Probably by this time the fact that your good dinner was spoiled has passed somewhat out of the picture, but I want to tell you right here that if you are in any time soon I hope you will give me the pleasure of buying you the best dinner we can find around these parts, and if I get to before you are up this way, all I ask is that you show the way to a good place.

In closing I want to assure you that the experience you have had in this instance is not typical of service. Actually, every one at the plant and in the branch is doing his level best to take care of our customers in a way that will be pleasing to them. We sincerely hope that we may continue to enjoy your business, not merely because of the dollars involved, but also because we seek opportunity to demonstrate to you the dependable service with which we honestly try to back up the various products of this company.

APOLOGY

Any explanation that clarifies misunderstanding and retracts offense may properly be regarded as a letter of apology. As in oral apology, so in letter apology, it is the tone and spirit of the expression that constitutes the be-all and the end-all. The words *sorry*, *pardon*, *forgive*, *apologize*, and their synonyms, may or may not be used. If genuine feeling is conveyed, nothing more is necessary. Letters of apology are by no means always easy to write, however, no matter how sincere the feeling behind them may be. Those below are in all cases good and, in most, excellent.

Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) wrote the following letter to John Evelyn, a contemporary diarist, regarding the return of two books (manuscripts). Literary historians have called this only an "apology of sorts" and have insisted that Pepys did not appear to be so sorry as he ought to have been! But the letter is after all a thoroly clean-cut and dignified statement of the facts, and it reveals, however tardily, an all-too-rare conscientiousness about returning borrowed literature.

The last being Confession, this in all good conscience should be Restitution Week; and, as far as I am able, the first act of it shall be the acquitting myself honestly towards you, in reference to that vast treasure of papers which I had had of yours so many years in my hands, in hopes of that *otium*³ I have now for three years been master of, but on conditions easily to be guessed at; and it is not above three weeks since I have taken the liberty of remanding any of them within my reach. Out of these I have made shift to collect all that relate to the State concernment in the ministry of Sir R. Browne, and those of your own growth towards the History of our Dutch War, 1665, which, with that which followed it into 1672, I wish I could see put together by your hand, as greatly suspecting they will prove the last instances of the sea actions of this nation, which will either bear telling at all, or be worthy of such an historian as Mr. Evelyn.

Another piece of restitution I have to make you is your *Columna Trajani*, which, out of a desire of making the most use of, with the greatest care to my eyes, I put out unfortunately to an unskilful hand for the washing its prints with some thin stain to abate the too strong lustre of the paper; in the execution whereof part of it suffered so much injury, that not knowing with what countenance to return it, I determined upon making you amends by the first fair book I could meet with; but with so ill success, that notwithstanding all my industry, at auctions and otherwise, I have only been able to lay eye on one, fair or foul, at Scott's, and that wholly wanting the historical part, Sir P. Lely, whose book it was, contenting himself with so much and no more, as touched the profession of a painter without that of a scholar. I have, therefore, thought it more religious to restore so great a jewel as your own book, even with this damage.

Perhaps the following letter by Daniel Defoe (1661?-1731) to John Dyer on June 17, 1710, is more properly a letter of respite or armistice than of apology. Defoe and Dyer were engaged in political writing for opposing parties. The omission of "personalities"—mud-slinging is the current term—for which Defoe pleads has the modern note in it that characterizes so much of his voluminous output.

Mr. Dyer,

I have your letter. I am rather glad to find you put it upon the trial who was the aggressor, than justify a thing which I am sure

³ Leisure.

you cannot approve; and in this I assure you I am far from injuring you, and refer you to the time when long since you had wrote: *I was fled from justice: one Sammon being taken up for printing a libel, and I being then on a journey*, nor the least charge against me for being concerned in it by anybody but your letter; also many unkind personal reflections on me in your letter, *when I was in Scotland, on the affair of the Union*, and I assure you when my paper had not in the least mentioned you, and those I refer to time and date for the proof of. I mention this only in defence of my last letter, in which I said no more in it than to let you see I did not merit such treatment, and could nevertheless be content to render any service to you, tho' I thought myself hardly used.

But to state the matter fairly between you and me, *a writing for different interests*, and so possibly coming under an unavoidable necessity of jarring in several cases: I am ready to make a fair truce of honour with you (*viz.*) that if what either party is doing, or says, that may clash with the party we are for and urges us to speak, it shall be done without naming either's name, and without personal reflections, and thus we may differ still, and yet preserve the Christian and the gentleman.

This, I think, is an offer may satisfy you. I have not been desirous of giving just offence to you, neither would I to any man however I may differ from him; and I see no reason why I should affront a man's person because I do not join with him in principle. I please myself with being the first proposer of so fair a treaty with you, because I believe, as you cannot deny its being very honourable, so it is not less so in coming first from me, who, I believe, could convince you of my having been the first and the most ill-treated—for further proof I refer you to your letters, *at the time I was threatened with by the Envoy of the King of Sweden*. However, Mr. Dyer, this is a method which may end what is past, and prevent what is future: and if refused, the future part I am sure cannot lye at my door. . . . Wishing you success in all things (*your opinions of Government excepted*),

I am, your humble servant,

DEFOE

This forthright explanation of his attitude was penned by Richard Steele (1672-1729) to his second wife, on August 12, 1708. Swift wrote to his Stella that "Steele is governed by his wife abominably." But it is now generally agreed that her domination was exactly what "Dick's" unstable and erratic nature needed to keep him to some degree of regularity in his work. This is a case in which clarification of an issue constitutes the best sort of apology. (See page 3 in regard to the last sentence in this letter.)

Madam,

I have your letter wherein you let me know that the little dispute we have had is far from being a Trouble to you. Nevertheless I assure you, any disturbance between us is the greatest affliction to

me imaginable. You talk of the Judgement of the World, I shall never Govern my Actions by y^e, but by the rules of morality and Right reason. I Love you better than the light of my Eyes, or the life blood in my Heart; but when I have lett you know that you are also to understand that neither my sight shall be so far enchanted, nor my affection so much master of me as to make me forgett our common Interest. To attend my businesse as I ought, and improve my fortune, it is necessary that my time and my Will should be under no direction but my own. Pray give my most Humble Service to Mrs. Binns. I Write all this rather to explain my own thoughts to you than answer your letter distinctly. I enclose it to you that upon second thoughts you may see the disrespectfull manner in which you treat

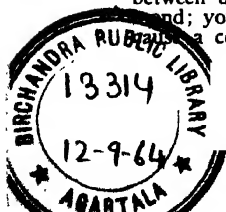
Y^r Affectionate Faithfull Husband:

Nine days before he died Robert Burns (1759-1796) wrote as follows to George Thomson for a loan. Whether the letter is more of an apology than of a solicitation, the reader will have to decide. Thomson was a music publisher, and Burns had written lyrics for him from time to time. Rumor had it that Burns had been underpaid by Thomson for this work but this has since been proved unjust. This letter (written on July 12, 1796, nine days before the poet's death) exaggerated Burns' needs at the moment, but the loan requested was immediately sent by Thomson.

After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on Rothiemurchie this morning. The measure is so difficult that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

The letter below was written by Charles Lamb (1775-1834) to Walter Wilson on August 14, 1801. Wilson had been a colleague of Lamb's at India House. Wilson and Lamb and others returned to London one night by boat. Lamb indulged some wild antics on the boat, placing members of the party in imminent danger of ducking if nothing worse. Wilson later wrote Lamb a letter of remonstrance. This was Lamb's apologetic reply:

I am extremely sorry that any serious differences should subsist between us, on account of some foolish behaviour of mine at Richmond; you knew me well enough before, that a very little liquor will make a considerable alteration in me.



I beg you to impute my conduct solely to that, and not to any deliberate intention of offending you, from whom I have received so many friendly attentions. I know that you think a very important difference in opinion with respect to some more serious subjects between us makes me a dangerous companion; but do not rashly infer, from some slight and light expressions which I may have made use of in a moment of levity, in your presence, without sufficient regard to your feelings—do not conclude that I am an inveterate enemy to all religion. I have had a time of seriousness, and I have known the importance and reality of a religious belief. Latterly, I acknowledge, much of my seriousness has gone off, whether from new company, or some other new associations; but I still retain at bottom a conviction of the truth, and a certainty of the usefulness of religion. I will not pretend to more gravity of feeling than I at present possess; my intention is not to persuade you that any great alteration is probable in me; sudden converts are superficial and transitory; I only want you to believe that I have *stamina* of seriousness within me, and that I desire nothing more than a return of that friendly intercourse which used to subsist between us, but which my folly has suspended.

Perhaps more apologies have been evoked by umbrellas than by anything else. This one, written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) to James T. Fields on March 3, 1863, is a little masterpiece of its kind.

I was ashamed this morning to send the expressman to your door in quest of an old umbrella, not unlike that which accompanied and consoled the exiled king of France in his flight to England. Nevertheless, I did send; for it is a lineal descendant of King Cotton, and is of that particularly audacious kind that never says "I lost." In the hands of a modern "sensual" poet the handle would become pearl (daughter, not mother of) and the rest would be of a "tissue from the looms of Samarcand." Finally, it is the one I keep to lend to lecturers at the Lowell Institute, and the like; and, though very dissipated, is worth reclaiming. Accept my apology and believe me, or not,

The following letter of apology was written by Mark Twain (1835-1910) to the wife of Grover Cleveland, then President of the United States, on his mistaking the day of his appointment with her for a dinner party in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Note how the incoherence, deliberately built into the composition of the letter, enhances the confusion of mind that he wishes to convey. The letter was written at Hartford, Connecticut, November 6, 1887.⁴

I do not know how it is in the White House, but in this house of ours whenever the minor half of the administration tries to run itself without the help of the major half it gets aground. Last night when I was offered the opportunity to assist you in the throwing open of

the Warner brothers superb benefaction in Bridgeport to those fortunate women, I naturally appreciated the honor done me, and promptly seized my chance. I had an engagement, but the circumstances washed it out of my mind. If I had only laid the matter before the major half of the administration on the spot, there would have been no blunder; but I never thought of that. So when I did lay it before her, later, I realized once more that it will not do for the literary fraction of a combination to try to manage affairs which properly belong in the office of the business bulk of it. I suppose the President often acts just like that: goes and makes an impossible promise, and you never find it out until it is next to impossible to break it up and set things straight again. Well, that is just our way, exactly—one half of the administration always busy getting the family into trouble, and the other half busy getting it out again. And so we do seem to be all pretty much alike after all.

The fact is, I had forgotten that we were to have a dinner party on that Bridgeport date—I thought it was the next day; which is a good deal of an improvement for me, because I am more used to being behind a day or two than ahead. But that is just the difference between one end of this kind of an administration and the other end of it, as you have noticed, yourself—the other end does not forget these things. Just so with a funeral; if it is the man's funeral, he is most always there, of course—but that is no credit to him, he wouldn't be there if you depended on him to remember about it; whereas, if on the other hand—but I seem to have got off from my line of argument somehow; never mind about the funeral. Of course I am not meaning to say anything against funerals—that is, as occasions—mere occasions—for as diversions I don't think they amount to much. But as I was saying—if you are not busy I will look back and see what it was I was saying.

I don't seem to find the place, but anyway she was as sorry as ever anybody could be that I could not go to Bridgeport, but there was no help for it. And I, I have been not only sorry but very sincerely ashamed of having made an engagement to go without first making sure that I could keep it, and I do not know how to apologize enough for my heedless breach of good manners.

In the latter part of 1917 a writer, who had been sent abroad by a publishing house, had the experience related in the following letter, when he had finished his assignment and was ready to come home. The letter was written by his employer in New York.

You were in London, booked to come home.

Thru the stupidity of our London office you were put to the inconvenience of going up to Liverpool, supposedly to take a boat directly to New York.

On arriving there you received a wire from our London office telling you to return to London and proceed thence to Brest to take passage to New York.

You did this, and then found that the boat touched at Southampton where you should have been sent in the first place.

We apologize for all this bungling, and we enclose a check to cover the extra expense that the run-around must have cost you. We are sorry that we cannot reimburse you for the trouble and annoyance you must have suffered—with characteristic patience, for we haven't heard a word from you about all this.

The only possible excuse, we fancy, is the customary one nowadays—the war has turned everything and everybody topsy-turvy. But that's not enough for us in this miserable case.

APPRECIATION

Letters of admiration, dedication, general satisfaction and approval are more or less arbitrarily set apart here as letters of appreciation in contradistinction to such letters as specifically express thanks, apology, invitation, congratulation, and condolence. These latter are, of course, letters of appreciation, too, but always in a somewhat more special and individual sense (compare, for instance, Lamb's letter below with the Lamb letters on pages 92 and 94). But neither the difference nor the distinction is to be too preciously insisted upon. And, after all, the letters themselves are all that matter.

John of Chrysostom (circa 317-407) addressed this letter to Castus, Diophantus, Cyriacus, Antiochus, Presbyters of Antioch. Note especially the gracious opening of this letter.

I have seldom written to you in words, but in thought and sentiment continually and frequently. Do not then consider yourselves as receiving only so many epistles as come to you in ink and on paper, but as many as go forth from the will and the purpose of the mind. For if you do but reckon them in this way, letters have been dispatched to you like showers of snow—in number. But if there is no one to be the bearer of them, my silence is not to be ascribed to my neglect, but to the difficulties of the circumstances in which I am placed. And this I say, that whether I write or am silent, you may think the same of the sentiments with which I regard you and your concerns. For wheresoever I am, I carry always about with me, the remembrance of you engraved on my mind. I acknowledge with great thankfulness the kindness so creditable to you, with which you have received the good monk, and rendered those more benevolently disposed towards him who were so unreasonably bent upon disputing and contending with him. I did not lightly affirm, nor out of any flattery towards you, that if myriads of waves were to be stirred up around you, your tranquillity would be undisturbed. For those who so easily prevent the shipwreck of others, will doubtless keep themselves out of the danger of storms. Favor me with frequent reports of your welfare; for you know how anxious I am for intelligence on this subject. Such, indeed, is the efficacy of your letters, when they bring me the news of your health, that by whatever sorrows, troubles, vexations, and daily deaths I am beset, when I receive letters from

you I am transported with joy, and gather from them the greatest consolation. It is the property and effect of letters, to refresh and revive, with such intelligence, those who are deprived by distance of personal communication.

The following dedicatory letters were addressed to the Right Honorable Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton and Baron of Titchfield, by William Shakespeare (1564-1616). Southampton was probably the only substantial patron that Shakespeare had, at one time giving him as much as one thousand pounds to enable him to consummate a purchase that he wished to make. The first letter is the dedication to "Venus and Adonis"; the second, to "Lucrece."

1

Right Honourable,

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

2

Right Honourable,

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with happiness.

Your lordship's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

John Suckling (1609-1642) was a renowned gallant and gamester in the England of his day. He was the darling of the Court, made so largely by the clever turns and twists that characterized his popular songs and ballads. This letter, written by him "To a Nobleman," has been called "a superlative example of epistolary courtliness."

Your humble servant had the honour to receive from your hand a letter, and had the grace upon the sight of it to blush; I but then found my own negligence, and but now have the opportunity to ask pardon for it. We have ever since been upon a march, and the places

we have come to, have afforded rather blood than ink; and of all things, sheets have been the hardest to come by, especially those of paper. If these few lines shall have the happiness to kiss your hand, they can assure you, that he who sent them knows no one to whom he owes more obligation than to your Lordship, and to whom he would more willingly pay it; and that it must be no less than necessity itself that can hinder him from often presenting it. Germany hath no whit altered me; I am still the humble servant of my lord that I was; and when I cease to be so, I must cease to be

Your most humble obedient servitor,

Sir William Temple (1628-1689) wrote this note of gratitude to his friend and benefactor, the Grand Duke of Tuscany. It is typical of the gracious and courtly acknowledgment of favors written in the early centuries by aspirants for place or recognition, to titled persons with power.

I should not have satisfied myself barely to resent all the favours of your most serene highness, and particularly the honour of your last of September thirtieth, if I were any way capable of acknowledging them as I ought, either by my expressions or my services. But your highness being pleased to oblige so many ways so unprofitable a person, can hope for no other returns than the pleasure of your own generosity, and the devotion of a heart so grateful as mine . . .

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) wrote the following from Geneva (July 1702) to Chamberlain Dashwood. The facetious quality of Addison's expression of appreciation, as well as its classical elegance, makes of the letter a little eighteenth-century masterpiece. The Latin quotation means "It is not permitted to any one soever to have a nose"!

About three days ago Mr. Bocher put a very pretty snuff-box in my hand. I was not a little pleased to hear that it belonged to myself, and was much more so when I found it was a present from a gentleman that I have so great an honor for. You did not probably foresee that it would draw on the trouble of a letter, but you must blame yourself for it. For my part, I can no more accept of a snuff-box without returning my acknowledgments, than I can take snuff without sneezing after it. This last I must own to you is so great an absurdity that I should be ashamed to confess it, were I not in hopes of correcting it very speedily. I am observed to have my box oftener in my hand than those that have been used to one these twenty years, for I can't forbear taking it out of my pocket whenever I think of Mr. Dashwood. You know Mr. Bays recommends snuff as a great provocative to wit, but you may produce this letter as a standing evidence against him. I have since the beginning of it taken above a dozen pinches, and still find myself much more inclined to sneeze than to jest. From whence I conclude that wit and tobacco are not inseparable, or, to make a pun of it, tho' a man may be master of a snuff-box,

Non cuiunque datum est habere nasum.

I should be afraid of being thought a pedant for my quotation, did not I know that the gentleman I am writing to always carries a Horace in his pocket. But whatever you may think me, pray, sir, do me the justice to esteem me

Your most

No one could say, after reading the following letter, that David Garrick, the actor, was not appreciated by the author of it, Laurence Sterne (1713-1768). Garrick had been living on the Continent for two years. His wife, Violette, whom Sterne refers to as "My Minerva," had been a steady influence in Sterne's almost constant struggle with the sentimental part of his nature. Powell was a city clerk who had formerly made some reputation as a matinee idol. This letter was written at Bath, April 6, 1765.

I scalp you! my dear Garrick!—my dear friend! foul befall the man who hurts a hair of your head!—and so full was I of that very sentiment, that my letter had not been put into the post office ten minutes, before my heart smote me; and I sent to recall it—but failed. You are sadly to blame, Shandy! for this, quoth I, leaning with my head on my hand, as I recriminated upon my false delicacy in the affair. Garrick's nerves (if he has any left) are as fine and delicately spun as thy own—his sentiments as honest and friendly; thou knowest, Shandy, that he loves thee—why wilt thou hazard him a moment's pain? Puppy! fool! coxcomb! jackass! etc., etc.; and so I balanced the account to your favour, before I received it drawn up in your way. I say your way—for it is not stated so much to your honour and credit, as I had passed the account before; for it was a most lamented truth, that I never received one of the letters your friendship meant me, except whilst in Paris. O! how I congratulate you for the anxiety the world has, and continues to be under, for your return. Return—return to the few who love you, and the thousands who admire you. The moment you set your foot upon your stage—mark! I tell it you, by some magic, irresistible power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh, and as strong and feelingly as ever. Nature, with Glory at her back, will light up the torch within you; and there is enough of it left, to heat and enlighten the world these many, many, many years.

Heaven be praised! (I utter it from my soul) that your lady and my Minerva is in a condition to walk to Windsor—full rapturously will I lead the graceful pilgrim to the temple, where I will sacrifice with the purest incense to her; but you may worship with me, or not, 'twill make no difference either in the truth or warmth of my devotion; still (after all I have seen) I still maintain her peerless.

Powell—good heaven! give me some one with less smoke and more fire. There are those, who, like the Pharisees, still think they shall be heard for *much* speaking. Come—come away, my dear Garrick, and teach us another lesson.

Adieu!—I love you dearly—and your lady better—not hobihorsically—but most sentimentally and affectionately—for I am yours (that

is, if you never say another word about——) with all the sentiments of love and friendship you deserve from me.

For an author to write that he loves his publisher is probably unique in literary history! But Walter Scott (1771-1832) combined apology with appreciation and love in this letter written on May 18, 1813, to his publisher and frankest critic, John Ballantyne, almost a decade before the crash in which both were financially ruined.

After many *offs* and *ons*, and as many *projets* and *contreprojets* as the Treaty of Amiens, I have at length concluded a treaty with Constable, in which I am sensible he has gained a great advantage; but what could I do amidst the disorder and pressure of so many demands? The arrival of your long-dated bills decided my giving in, for what could James or I do with them? I trust this sacrifice has cleared our way, but many rubs remain; nor am I, after these hard skirmishes, so able to meet them by my proper credit. Constable, however, will be a zealous ally; and for the first time these many weeks, I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow, for now I do think that, by our joint exertions, we shall get well through the storm, save *Beaumont* from depreciation, get a partner in our heavy concerns, reef our topsails, and move on securely under an easy sail. And if, on the one hand, I have sold my gold too cheap, I have, on the other, turned my lead to gold. Brewster and Singers are the only heavy things to which I have not given a blue eye. Had your news of Cadell's sale reached us here, I could not have harpooned my grampus as deeply as I have done, as nothing but *Rokeby* would have barbed the hook.

Adieu, my dear John. I have the most sincere regard for you, and you may depend on my considering your interest with quite as much attention as my own. If I have ever expressed myself with irritation in speaking of this business, you must impute it to the sudden, extensive, and unexpected embarrassments in which I found myself involved all at once. If to your real goodness of heart and integrity, and to the quickness and acuteness of your talents, you added habits of more universal circumspection, and above all, the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard, I pronounce that the world never held such a man of business. These it must be your study to add to your other good qualities. Meantime, as some one says to Swift, I love you with all your failings. Pray make an effort, and love me with all mine.

Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850), later Lord Jeffrey, was a lawyer, a politician, and an editor. He was likewise one of the great letter writers of the early nineteenth century. It was as editor of The Edinburgh Review that he gained the reputation for severity, if not, indeed, irascibility. But this letter written by him on June 20, 1848, to his grandchild reveals the tender and appreciative side of his nature.

My Sonsy Nancy!—I love you very much, and think very often of your dimples, and your pimples, and your funny little plays, and all your pretty ways: and I send you my blessing, and wish I were kissing, your sweet rosy lips, or your fat finger-tips; and that you were here, so that I could hear you stammering words, from a mouthful of curds; and a great purple tongue (as broad as it's long); and see your round eyes, open wide with surprise, and your wondering look, to find yourself at Craigcrook!

Tomorrow is Maggie's *birthday*, and we have built up a great bonfire in honour of it; and Maggie Rutherford (dō you remember her at all?) is coming out to dance round it; and all the servants are to drink her health, and wish her many happy days with you and Frankie—and all the mammays and pappys, whether grand or not grand. We are very glad to hear that she and you love each other so well, and are happy in making each other happy; and that you do not forget dear Tarley or Frankie, when they are out of sight, nor Granny either—or even old Granny pa, who is in most danger of being forgotten, he thinks. We have had showery weather here, but the garden is full of flowers; and Frankie has a new wheelbarrow, and does a great deal of work, and *some mischief* now and then. All the dogs are very well; and Foxey is mine, and Froggy is Tarley's, and Frankie has taken up with great white Neddy,—so that nothing is left for Granny but old barking Jacky and Dover when the carriage comes. The donkey sends his compliments to you, and maintains that you are a cousin of his! or a near relation, at all events. He wishes, too, that you and Maggie would come; for he thinks that you will not be so heavy on his back as Tarley and Maggie Rutherford, who now ride him without mercy.

This is Sunday, and Ali is at church—Granny and I taking care of Frankie till she comes back, and he is now hammering very busily at a corner of the carpet, which he says does not lie flat. He is very good, and really too pretty for a boy, though I think his two eyebrows are growing into one—stretching and meeting each other above his nose! But he has not so many *freckles* as Tarley, who has a very fine crop of them, which she and I encourage as much as we can. I hope you and Maggie will lay in a stock of them, as I think no little girl can be pretty without them in summer. Our pea-hens are suspected of having young families in some hidden place, for though they pay us short visits now and then, we see them but seldom, and always alone. If you and Maggie were here with your sharp eyes, we think you might find out their secret, and introduce us to a nice new family of young peas. The old papa cock, in the meantime says he knows nothing about them, and does not care a farthing! We envy you your young peas of another kind, for we have none yet, nor any asparagus neither, and hope you will bring some down to us in your lap. Tarley sends her love, and I send mine to you all; though I shall think most of Maggie tomorrow morning, and of you when your birth morning comes. When is that do you know? It is never dark now here, and we might all go to bed without candles. And so bless you ever and ever, my dear dimply pussie.—Your very loving

GRANDPA

Charles Lamb wrote to Samuel Taylor Coleridge in appreciation of roast pig. Lamb's essays frequently have the quality of personal letters; his letters, that of personal essays. It was the following letter to Coleridge that probably gave Lamb the thought of writing his famous essay, "A Dissertation on Roast Pig." The date of the letter is March 9, 1822, and the essay appeared in *The London Magazine*, September 1822. Owen was Lamb's landlord in Russell Street. (See pages 92 and 94.)

It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well—they are interesting creatures at a certain age—what a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling—and brain sauce—did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly, with no Oedipean avulsion? Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate? Had you no cursed complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it? Not that I sent the pig nor can form the remotest guess what part Owen could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in his life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away.

Teals, widgeons, snipes, barn-door fowl, ducks, geese—your tame villalio things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as myself. They are but self extended, but pardon me if I stop somewhere—where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay I should think it an affront, an under-valuing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs I ever felt of remorse was when a child—my kind old aunt had strained her pocket strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. On my way home through the Borough, I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant—but thereabouts; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner; and in the coxcombrity of taught-charity, I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me: the sum it was to her; the pleasure she had a right to expect from me—not the old imposter—should take in eating her cake; and cursed ingratitude by which under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like—and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy and proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to dunghill with the ashes of that unreasonable pauper.

But when Providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

Yours (short of pig) to command in everything.

The following letter was written by John Keats (1795-1821) to John Taylor of the publishing concern, Taylor and Hessey, on May 16, 1817. It is primarily a business letter, belonging under such classifications as acknowledgment, claim, adjustment, and loan, all at once and all in one.

I am extremely indebted to you for your liberality in the shape of manufactured rag, value £20., and shall immediately proceed to destroy some of the minor heads of that Hydra the Dun; to conquer which the knight need have no sword, shield, cuirass, cuisses, herbad-geon, spear, casque, greaves, paldrons, spurs, chevron, or any other scaly commodity, but he need only take the Bank-note of Faith and Cash of Salvation, and set out against the monster, invoking the aid of no Archimago or Urganda, but finger me the paper, light as the Sybil's leaves in Virgil, whereat the fiend skulks off with his tail between his legs. Touch him with this enchanted paper, and he whips you his head away as fast as a snail's horn; but then the horrid propensity he has to put it up again has discouraged many very valiant knights. He is such a never-ending, still-beginning, sort of body, like my landlady of the Bell. I think I could make a nice little allegorical poem, called "The Dun," where we would have the Castle of Carelessness, the Drawbridge of Credit, Sir Novelty Fashion's expedition against the City of Tailors, &c., &c. I went day by day at my poem for a month; at the end of which time, the other day, I found my brain so overwrought, that I had neither rhyme nor reason in it, so was obliged to give up for a few days. I hope soon to be able to resume my work. I have endeavoured to do so once or twice; but to no purpose. Instead of poetry, I have a swimming in my head, and feel all the effects of a mental debauch, lowness of spirits, anxiety to go on, without the power to do so, which does not at all tend to my ultimate progression. However, tomorrow I will begin my next month. This evening I go to Canterbury, having got tired of Margate; I was not right in my head when I came. At Canterbury I hope the remembrance of Chaucer will set me forward like a billiard ball. I have some idea of seeing the Continent some time this summer. In repeating how sensible I am of your kindness, I remain,

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) expressed not only confidence but satisfaction and appreciation in the following note to the then young Lieutenant-General Grant. It was written at the Executive Mansion, Washington, April 30, 1864. Needless to say, Lincoln's letters, like his speeches, are worthy of the closest study by all who would attain to a direct, succinct, economical, businesslike style in writing.

Not expecting to see you again before the spring campaign opens, I wish to express in this way my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster or capture of our men in great numbers shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it. And now, with a brave army and a just cause, may God sustain you.

This enthusiastic, not to say extravagant, appreciation of Irving and his works, was written by Charles Dickens (1812-1870) to Irving some time during 1841. It was, after all, Irving's good opinion that he most appreciated.

There is no man in the world who could have given me the heartfelt pleasure you have, by your kind note of the thirteenth of last month. There is no living writer, and there are very few among the dead, whose approbation I should feel so proud to earn. And with everything you have written, upon my shelves, and in my thoughts, and in my heart of hearts, I may honestly and truly say so. If you could know how earnestly I write this, you would be glad to read it—as I hope you will be, faintly guessing at the warmth of the hand I autobiographically hold out to you over the broad Atlantic.

I wish I could find in your welcome letter some hint of an intention to visit England. I can't. I have held it at arm's length, and taken a bird's-eye view of it, after reading it a great many times, but there is no greater encouragement in it this way than on a microscopic inspection. I should love to go with you—as I have gone, God knows how often—into Little Britain, and Eastcheap, and Green Arbour Court, and Westminster Abbey. I should like to travel with you, outside the last of the coaches, down to Bracebridge Hall. It would make my heart glad to compare notes with you about that shabby gentleman in the oilcloth hat and red nose, who sat in the nine-cornered back-parlor of the Mason's Arms, and about Robert Preston and the tallow-chandler's widow, whose sitting-room is second nature to me; and about all those delightful places and people that I used to walk about and dream of in the daytime, when a very small and not over-particularly-taken-care-of boy. I have a good deal to say, too, about that dashing Alonzo de Ojeda, that you can't help being fonder of than you ought to be; and much to hear concerning Moorish legend, and poor unhappy Bobadil. Diedrich Knickerbocker I have worn to death in my pocket, and yet I should show you his mutilated carcass with a joy past all expression.

I have been so accustomed to associate you with my pleasantest and happiest thoughts, and with my leisure hours, that I rush at once into full confidence with you, and fall, as it were naturally and by the very laws of gravity, into your open arms. Questions come thronging to my pen as to the lips of people who meet after long hoping to do so. I don't know what to say first or what to leave

unsaid, and am constantly disposed to break off and tell you again how glad I am this moment has arrived.

My dear Washington Irving, I cannot thank you enough for your cordial and generous praise, or tell you what deep and lasting gratification it has given to me. I hope to have many letters from you, and to exchange a frequent correspondence. I send this to say so. After the first two or three I shall settle down into a connected style, and become gradually rational.

You know what the feeling is, after having written a letter, sealed it, and sent it off. I shall picture your reading this, and answering it before it has lain one night in the post-office. Ten to one that before the fastest packet could reach New York I shall be writing again.

Do you suppose the post-office clerks care to receive letters? I have my doubts. They get into a dreadful habit of indifference. A post-man, I imagine, is quite callous. Conceive his delivering one to himself, without being startled by a preliminary double knock!

Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915) was by no means always unanimously approved by members of the clergy, chiefly because they did not understand him and perhaps made no effort to. But he sometimes received letters of appreciation such as the following, and, needless to say, was delighted to publish them. This one was written to him on March 28, 1908, by the Reverend Frank Ashton, missionary to the State of Coahuila, Mexico.⁵

I've just read your last *Philistine*, but I'm not standing with my hat in my hand either—I just took it off and threw it up in the air, and I don't care if I never see it again. And before I go out to buy another I want to say that this number is a "corker." I'm proud of it—it is all my own language and says what I've been wanting to say ever since I emerged, as it were.

Now if any one says anything to you for what you do in that April number, call on me. You sure have got things going now and I'm with you. There may be a few classics in the world that are good—that's so—and there may be some writers who can come a skilful twist on history: but for the real essence, the pure heart of life—the roses and wine of the pen—the pulse-quickeners—the appeal to the soul of honest, liberal, human humanity, you are the rouge d'or soufflé fromage.

CONDOLENCE

The letter of condolence is too generally regarded as difficult. The card or telegram of sympathy may, however, not always take its place, especially in close social and business relationships. The good letter of condolence should not only solace or comfort; it should, if possible, renew faith and courage, and attempt to rees-

⁵ Used by permission of Mr. Elbert Hubbard II.

tablish cheerful outlook. Walter Savage Landor's note to Robert Browning on the death of Mrs. Browning remains a masterpiece in its kind. "Dear Browning:" he wrote, "Of all your friends who lament your irreparable loss, not one grieves more deeply than I do. I will not say more; I can say nothing more true. Let these few lines, if they can be but of small or no comfort to you, at least manifest the affection of your affectionate W. Landor." And the following illustrations "also" yield proof that the letter of condolence may be made a personality message.

This letter was written by Gregory Theologus, Bishop of Sasima, (circa 328-389) to Gregory Nyssen, on the death of Basil, the latter's brother and the former's friend and companion.

Among the sorrows of my life this was in reserve for me—to hear of the death of Basil, and the departure of his holy soul, which has absented itself from us to be present with the Lord, after having during all his life made this the great object of his solicitude. By the serious and very dangerous illness with which I am at present afflicted, besides other hindrances, I am deprived of the opportunity of kissing that sacred dust, and of being present with you, and partaking of those proper consolations which your philosophy will suggest, and by which the friends of both of us will be comforted. For to witness the desolation of the church, shorn of so much glory, and bereaved of such a crown, is too much for the eyes or ears of those who are intelligent enough to be fully sensible of their loss. But you seem to me, surrounded as you are by friends, and well furnished with arguments of consolation, to derive solace from nothing so much as from your own resources and from your reflexions on the deceased; and thus you have been a pattern to all others of true philosophy, and, as it were, a sort of spiritual rule or measure of moderation in prosperity, and of fortitude in adversity. It is thus that philosophy manifests itself, by keeping us from being elated or depressed by the opposite extremes of success or calamity. In what has thus far fallen from me, I have been looking to the case as affecting your excellency. But by what time or argument shall I be consoled, who am writing this, except by your society and converse, by far the best legacy which that blessed man has bequeathed to me; that by seeing his virtues in you, as in a clear and shining mirror, I may imagine myself still to have him in possession.

When the oldest son of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was killed at Marston Moor, the Protector broke the news to a young fellow-soldier and friend of his son, Colonel Valentine Walton, in the following letter. Note that he wrote as tho it were Colonel Walton who needed the consolation, thus getting vicarious comfort for his own grief. This letter was written "Before York, 5 July, 1644."

It's our duty to sympathize in all mercies and to praise the Lord together in chastisement or trial, that so we may sorrow together.

Truly England and the Church of God hath had a great favor from the Lord, in this great victory given unto us, such as the like never

was since this war began. It had all the evidences of an absolute victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never charged but we routed the enemy. The left wing, which I commanded, being on our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, beat all the Prince's horse. God made them as stubble to our swords. We charged their foot regiments with our horse, and routed all we charged. The particulars I cannot relate now; but I believe of the twenty thousand the Prince has not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.

Sir, God hath taken away our eldest son by a cannon shot. It broke his leg. We were necessitated to have it cut off, whereof he died.

Sir, you know my own trials this way: but the Lord supported me with this: That the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant for and live for. There is our precious child full of glory, never to know sin and sorrow any more. He was a gallant young man, exceedingly gracious. God give you His comfort. Before his death he was so full of comfort that to Frank Russel and myself he could not express it, "It was so great above his pain." This he said to us. Indeed it was admirable. A little after, he said: "One thing lay upon my spirit." I asked him what that was. He told me it was that God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of His enemies. At his fall, his horse being killed with the bullet, and as I am informed three horses more, I am told he bid them open to the right and left, that he might see the rogues run. Truly he was exceedingly beloved in the army of all who knew him. But few knew him; for he was a precious young man fit for God. You have cause to bless the Lord. He is a glorious saint in heaven; wherein you ought exceedingly to rejoice. Let this drink up your sorrow; seeing these are not feigned words to comfort you, but the thing is so real and undoubted a truth. We may do all things by the strength of Christ. Seek that, and you shall easily bear your trial. Let this public mercy to the Church of God make you forget your private sorrow. The Lord be your strength: so prays

Your truly faithful and loving brother in Christ,

On September 1, 1670, Sir William Temple wrote as follows to a friend in France on the death of a daughter. (See pp. 25 and 338.)

Yesterday late in the evening I received an account of your loss; and can assure you that my wife, my sister, and myself were so sensibly afflicted at it, that if it were possible grief could be lessened by being communicated with real friends, upon these sad occasions, you would have immediately found some consolation in yours. I must confess, your grief is lawful enough, and founded not only upon the dictates of nature, but upon the merits of her you lament; so that to pretend to comfort you by other considerations than those which your prudence, and, above all, which your piety would suggest, would be to attempt an unprofitable work. God has pleased to impose this tribute for the continuance of our lives, often to lament the death of our friends. We must learn to submit and to resign to his will, which is the wisest and most Christian part we can follow. To this I shall add, that the desires of your friends who yet remain, and your care of their interests, do demand from you that you will pre-

serve yourself to them. Among these there is none who is more than I, sir, your most humble and most affectionate servant.

William Godwin (1756-1836) wrote the following letter to his daughter, Mary, on the death of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. The date is August 9, 1822:

My poor girl! What do you mean to do with yourself? You surely do not mean to stay in Italy? How glad I should be to be near you, and to endeavour by new expedients each day to make up for your loss! But you are the best judge. If Italy is a country to which in these few years you are naturalized, and if England is become dull and odious to you, then stay.

I should think, however, that now you have lost your closest friend, your mind would naturally turn homewards, and [to] your earliest friend. Is it not so? Surely we might be a great support to each other, under the trials to which we are reserved. What signify a few outward adversities, if we find a friend at home?

Above all, let me entreat you to keep up your courage. You have many duties to perform; you must now be the father as well as the mother; and I trust you have energy of character enough to enable you to perform your duties honourably and well.

Ever and ever most affectionately yours,

Unique among letters written on the death of loved ones is the following letter tribute to "Dear Ernest" by Elbert Hubbard. Ernest Crosby, Elbert Hubbard, and John Burroughs frequently formed a thr-esome in walks and talks Crosby was one of the most prominent of American jurists and reformers, as well as a writer of note. He was born in the same year as Hubbard, and died eight years before the sinking of the Lusitania on which Elbert Hubbard met his death.⁶

On July 20, 1822, James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) comforted Mary Shelley as follows, on the death of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley:

I trust you will have set out on your return from that dismal place, before you receive this. You will also have seen Trelawny. God bless you, and enable us all to be a support for one another. Let us do our best, if it is only for that purpose. It is easier for me to say that I will do it, than for you; but whatever happens, this I can safely say, that I belong to those whom Shelley loved, and that all which it is possible for me to do for them, now and ever, is theirs. I will grieve with them, endure with them, and, if it be necessary, work for them while I have life.—Your most affectionate friend,

P.S. Marianne sends you a thousand loves, and longs, with myself, to try whether we can say or do one thing that can enable you and Mrs. Williams to bear up a little better. But we rely on your great strength of mind.

⁶ Used by permission of Mr. Elbert Hubbard II.

You and I were born the same year. When we climbed a mountain a short time ago, with Ol' John Burroughs, you in playful mood told Ol' John that you expected to preach his funeral sermon. And Ol' John, in love, replied that he hoped and expected to do as much for both of us.

And now men say that you are dead. But you are not dead to me, nor to Ol' John, nor to all of the many men and women and children who knew and loved you well; for those who knew you loved you, and those who did not love you did not know you.

I think of you now, as I thought of you while you were with us, as quite the manliest man I ever saw. Your scorned military experience saved you from the scholar's stoop; and yours was ever a skyey gravitation. Your towering form & martial ways caused the Egyptian fellahs at Cairo to turn and say: "There goes the King of America!"

Yet you were not a king, save for your own spirit, for you loved men too well to wish to rule them. Your prophetic soul foresaw a time when humanity would be free—free from the mesh of entanglement woven by centuries of selfishness, serfdom, and misrule—and you, of all men, knew that freedom comes through giving freedom. You have left the world better than you found it, and made your impress on the times.

Yet you never really had a chance in life, being born into the conventions, of a family eminently respectable, in a great city, and heir to wealth, position, and educational advantages. Disadvantages, poverty, disappointment, and grief might have made you a Messiah—a man whom men confuse with Deity incarnate.

Your unswerving honesty, your purity of motive, your cleanly, abstemious life—eating no meat, drinking neither tea nor coffee, never touching tobacco nor strong drink, yet never censuring those whose lives differed from your own—made you as one set apart. However, you were never prudish, for nothing that was human was alien to you. In great degree you overcame the handicap of birth, breaking many of your fetters, and never wearing your chains as jewelry.

Your name will live with that trinity of prophets and seers—your own Tolstoy, Walt Whitman, and Henry Thoreau—as one who blessed and benefited the world, exorcising fear, banishing doubt, and filling our day-dreams with hope, faith, courage, and love. You were a sample of the twenty-fifth century, sent by the Supreme Intelligence for the encouragement of this.

And now, as you fare into the Unknown, I salute you and write this line, trying to tell you how very precious to me is the memory of your friendship, and that, though dead, you still live in minds made better. So farewell and farewell!

The following letter was written by Walter Raleigh (1861-1922) to Lady Desborough on the loss of her two sons—the Honorable Julian and the Honorable William Grenfell—within a day or two of each other in the World War. The date of the letter is August

5, 1915. *Julian was the author of a book of poems entitled, with sad and ironic appropriateness, "Into Battle."* Walter Raleigh—Sir Walter Raleigh—was professor of English Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford.⁷

I know the ordinary consolations; they do not seem to me to be quite real. But there is something quite real and consoling, if human nature could take it without ceasing to be human; we cannot work it out, that's all. But we couldn't do without Julian's life and Billy's. They are not gone, we breathe them, they are the temper of the British Army at its best. It would not matter even if they were not remembered, they passed on the flame undimmed. The great things seem cold, but they are there all the time, and Julian and Billy believed in them, and had splendid lives. Anyhow, they have made life the little thing it is. Because of them, I am ready to say "Take it" more easily than before. What must it be for the people they fought alongside of?

I do not know how I could stand it. The reason is all right, quite sane and quiet, but the flesh rebels. The reason tells you that you are happy, and you know you are, but it does not fill the long day.

I go limping along . . . And I am glad to have met and known such soldiers

*More than two years later—on October 4, 1917—Raleigh wrote this letter to Lady Desborough:*⁷

How pleased Julian would be with these last three victories, which begin to put the War right. It is because he and his like believed in them, against the odds, that we have them now. I can never think of him except as a complete life that went up in flame. Lately, several times, I have had to do with other losses that are less typical and more tragic. Sir William Osler's only son, for instance, and one or two friends of my own, dutiful citizens and brave fighters, who would never have chosen any sort of War. I always find myself thinking of Julian, who breathed free in War, as if it took a weight off him. I believe hundreds of thousands of people cry with gratitude, though not from fear, when they think of the little old army.

Not that I forget Billy, but he is more familiar to me, more like me and my friends. Julian I don't understand but merely worship. He gives meaning to the words *British Empire*.

I don't think it's fair that you should hear so little as you probably do of all the times that Julian and Billy are thought of. So, as I was thinking of them, I thought I would let you know.

*Walter Hines Page (1855-1918) wrote on August 9, 1914, the following letter to Woodrow Wilson, then President of the United States, on the death of Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Page was at the time Ambassador to the Court of St. James's.*⁸

⁷ Used by permission of Lady Raleigh.

⁸ Used by permission of Mr. Arthur W. Page

There is nothing that even your oldest and nearest friends can say—words fail in the face of a bereavement like this. But I can't resist the impulse to write how deeply I feel for you.

You would be touched if I could tell you the number of good men and women who every hour of the day and night have expressed to me the grief with which they heard the sad news—men and women who never saw you, from King down to the English messenger in our embassy. Many of them have come in and left their cards. Sir Edward Grey especially charged me to convey to you his sincere sympathy. Before we plunged into the deepest depths of all this trouble, in the long conversation we had on Friday, he asked me many sympathetic questions about you and Mrs. Wilson. Lord Bryce, too, Jusserand, who is here trying to get back to Washington—everybody.

But, my dear friend, it hits us hardest who have known you longest and love you most and who wish for you now all possible strength, in this sad, sad hour of the world when, more than any other man in the world you are most needed—all possible strength to you. If the deep sympathy of all your friends, known and unknown to you, can help to support you and to keep your high spirit and courage up, you have it in most abundant measure.

Mrs. Page and I grieve with you and hope for you to the utmost.

The two notes of condolence below were received by a business house from two neighboring concerns on the death of its president.

1

In the present calamity that has befallen you, we hasten to assure you of our very deep sympathy and concern. If, in the emergency occasioned by the death of one who has for the past many years meant so much to your enterprise and to this business community, we can be of any service either great or small, pray command us. The memory of the sterling character and magnificent example of Jonathan Tremaine will live on in your hearts and ours to give us faith and courage in whatever struggles the future holds for us.

2

The sudden death of Jonathan Tremaine, President of the Company, has been a great shock to us. We have lost a good neighbor and a distinguished merchant-diser in our industrial field, and we extend to you and the members of your company our sincerest sympathy. May you be given the courage and the vision to carry on in the fine spirit and the high tradition that have characterized his leadership for so many years.

CONGRATULATION

Of all the letters that are evoked by occasions, the letter of congratulation makes unique demands upon the writer, if he would make it a personality composition. The mere duty of congratula-

tion may, of course, be made as perfunctory as the mere duty of condolence—it may, that is, be discharged by means of a visiting card or a telegram. But the sincere desire to congratulate a friend and the capacity to feel his joy with him, call for the individual style and the facile pen. If the style's the man, indeed, then the letter of congratulation is the letter that proves the dictum, as the following epistles indicate.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) wrote the following letter of congratulation to his lifelong friend, the Honorable (later Baron) George Lyttleton, on the occasion of the latter's second marriage. The date of the letter is August 29, 1749. Six months earlier Fielding had dedicated his novel "Tom Jones" to Lyttleton who had befriended the author in many ways. Fielding had no qualms about linking congratulations with petitions. Would-be grooms, especially titled ones, were accustomed to being congratulated with ulterior motives. Moreover, the matrimonial period of life has been called the most generous as well as the most gullible.

Permit me to bring up the rear of your friends in paying my compliments of congratulation on your late happy nuptials. There may, perhaps, be seasons when the rear may be as honourable a post in friendship as in war; and if so, such certainly must be every time of joy and felicity. Your present situation must be full of bliss; and so will be, I am confident, your future life from the same fountain. Nothing can equal the excellent character your lady bears amongst those of her own sex, and I never yet knew them speak well of a woman who did not deserve their good words. How admirable is your fortune in the matrimonial lottery! I will venture to say there is no man alive who exults more in this, or in any other happiness that can attend you, than myself, and you ought to believe me from the same reason that fully persuades me of the satisfaction you receive from any happiness of mine: this reason is that you must be sensible how much of it I owe to your goodness; and there is a great pleasure in gratitude, though I believe it second to that of benevolence; for of all the delights upon earth, none can equal the raptures which a good mind feels in conferring happiness on those whom we think worthy of it. This is the sweetest ingredient in power, and I solemnly protest I never wished for power more than a few days ago, for the sake of a man whom I love, the more, perhaps, from the esteem I know he bears you than any other reason. This man is in love with a young creature of the most apparent worth who returns his affections. Nothing is wanting to make two very miserable people extremely blest, but a moderate portion of the greatest of human evils, so philosophers call it, and so it is called by divines, whose word is the rather to be taken as they are many of them more conversant with this evil than even the philosophers were. The name of this man is Moore, to whom you kindly destined the laurel, which, though it hath long been withered, may not probably soon drop from the brow of its present

possessor. But there is another place of much the same value now vacant: it is that of deputy licenser to the stage. Be not offended at this hint; for though I will own it impudent enough in one who hath so many obligations of his own to you to venture to recommend another man to your favour, yet impudence itself may possibly be a virtue when exerted on behalf of a friend: at least I am the less ashamed of it, as I have known men remarkable for the opposite modesty, possess it without the mixture of any other quality. In this fault, then, you must indulge me; for should I ever see you as high in power as I wish, and as it is perhaps more my interest than your own that you should be, I shall be guilty of the like as often as I find a man in whom I can, after much intimacy, discover no want but that of the evil above mentioned. I beg you will do me the honour of making my compliments to your unknown lady, and believe me to be, with the highest esteem, respect, and gratitude, Sir, your most obliged, most obedient, humble servant,

*When the royal artist, William P. Frith, became a grandfather for the first time, Charles William Shirley Brooks (1816-1874), novelist, dramatist, editor of Punch, wrote him this letter of congratulation, dated November 21, 1865, at Punch Office, London.**

Frith, even Grandfather Frith—With my whole soul do I congratulate thee and the Grandmama, and the venerable Aunt Sissy, and all the small uncles and infinitesimal aunts, or emmets. But chiefly I congratulate thee, O reverent and reverend, for the opportunity now afforded thee for the mending of thy ways. Henceforth we look for no frivolity from thee, no unseemly gibes and jests to which thou alone addest, "That's good," and echo is silent. Henceforth thou must study to live at peace with all men, as becomes white hairs, and let us hear no more when ——— announceth his 'last exhibition,' that thou didst hope it would begin at three minutes to eight a.m.; and be at Newgate. Truly this is a great chance for thee, O man of palettes, and aerial perspectives, and conscientious work, such as the *Athenæum* loves to indicate with the gesture called "taking a sight."

Learn psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, to be chanted unto thy Grandchild; and endeavour to obtain some knowledge of geography, etymology, tin-tacks, and prosody, that thou mayest not be put utterly to shame when the child shall demand information of thee.

Leave off smoking, yet keep a box for thy younger friends who are not Grandfathers.

Scoff not at architects, for where wouldst thou be but for houses? Nay, art not thou the founder of a house?

Look no longer at the ankles of the other sex, save in the way of thy calling, and speak no soft words unto the maidens, saying, "Lo, I adore thee," when thou dost nothing of the kind. Abjure the society of low Bohemians like ——— and ———, but cultivate the honest and virtuous, like Brooks, and, in so far as thou mayest, imitate him.

Used by permission of *Punch*.

Do not eat too much ham at breakfast, for temperance becometh the aged. Read few novels, but let those thou readest be of the best, as, *Broken to Harness*, *The Silver Cord*, *An Artist's Proof*, and *Blount Tempest*. Likewise, begin to dress less jauntily, and wear a high waistcoat like the Right Reverend Bellew and the Right Reverend Brooks.

When thou goest to the Academy dinner, avoid, so far as thou canst, the taking too much wine, for what thing is less dignified than a swipecy Grandfather?

Cherish these counsels in the apple of thine eye, and in the pineapple of thy rum; and be thankful that at a time of life when other young men may not ungracefully indulge in youthful levity, thou art called to a higher and a graver sphere.

Buy a stick, and practise walking with it, hending thy back, and not perking up elegantly when a comely female passeth by.

Have grave men to thy feasts, notably him who expecteth the interview with Mrs. Cottle, and to suffer as he never suffered before. So I greet thee, Grandfather, and hope that thou wilt have many grandsons and granddaughters, and wilt ask me to the christening of them all.

When, on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson declared war against Germany, much to the satisfaction of the Allies, the following letter of congratulation was written by Sir Edward Grey, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, to Walter Hines Page, then Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. It is a beautifully spontaneous piece of writing, the more significant for its having been written by one who had previously been forced out of office by war politics.¹⁰

Rosehall Post Office,
Sutherland,

April 8, 1917.

Dear Mr. Page:

This is a line that needs no answer to express my congratulations on President Wilson's address. I can't express adequately all that I feel. Great gratitude and great hope are in my heart. I hope now that some great and abiding good to the world will yet be wrought out of all this welter of evil. Recent events in Russia, too, stimulate this hope: they are a good in themselves, but not the power for good in this war that a great and firmly established free country like the United States can be. The President's address and the way it has been followed up in your country is a splendid instance of great action finely inspired. I glow with admiration.

Yours sincerely,
GREY OF FALLODON.

While living at Skerryvore, Bournemouth, during the winter of 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson had fortunately come to know

¹⁰ Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

Miss May Rawlinson. She was then nineteen, and he described her as "simple, human, as beautiful—as herself." And he wrote in a letter to a friend, "We are all dead in love with her." On the announcement of her marriage he wrote her the following letter from Vailima, Apia, Samoa, in April of 1891. The salutation was "My dear May." ¹¹

I never think of you by any more ceremonial name, so I will not pretend. There is not much chance that I shall forget you until the time comes for me to forget all this little turmoil in a corner (though indeed I have been in several corners) of an inconsiderable planet. You remain in my mind for a good reason, having given me (in so short a time) the most delightful pleasure. I shall remember, and you must still be beautiful. The truth is, you must grow more so, or you will soon be less. It is not so easy to be a flower, even when you bear a flower's name. And if I admired you so much, and still remember you, it is not because of your face, but because you were then worthy of it, as you must still continue.

Will you give my heartiest congratulations to Mr. Spender? He has my admiration; he is a brave man; when I was young, I should have run away from the sight of you, pierced with the sense of my unfitness. He is more wise and manly. What a good husband he will have to be! And you—what a good wife! Carry your love tenderly. I will never forgive him—or you—it is in both of your hands—if the face that once gladdened my heart should be changed into one sour or sorrowful.

What a person you are to give flowers! It was so I first heard of you; and now you are giving the May flower!

Yes, Skerryvore has passed; it *was*, for us. But I wish you could see us in our new home on the mountain, in the middle of great woods, and looking far out on the Pacific. When Mr. S. is very rich, he must bring you round the world and let you see it, and see the old gentleman and old lady. I mean to live quite a long while yet, and my wife must do the same, or else I couldn't manage it, so, you see, you will have plenty of time; and it's a pity not to see the most beautiful places, and the most beautiful people moving there, and the real moon and stars overhead, instead of the tin imitations that preside over London. I do not think my wife very well, but I am in hopes she will now have a little rest. It has been a hard business, above all for her; we lived four months in the hurricane season in a miserable house, overborne with work, ill-fed, continually worried, drowned in perpetual rain, beaten upon by wind, so that we must sit in the dark in the evenings; and then I ran away, and she had a month of it alone. Things go better now, the last of the work is broken; and we are still foolish enough to look forward to a little peace. I am a very different person from the person of Skerryvore. The other day I was three-and-twenty hours in an open boat; it made me pretty ill; but fancy its not killing me half-way! It is like a fairy story that I should have recovered liberty and strength, and should go round again among my fellow men, boating, riding,

¹¹ Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

bathing, toiling hard with a wood-knife in the forest. I can wish you nothing more delightful than my fortune in life; I wish it you, and better if the thing is possible.

Lloyd is tinkling below me on the typewriter; my wife has just left the room. She asks me to say she would have written had she been well enough, and hopes to do so still. Accept the best wishes of your admirer,

In his customarily lively vein Eugene Field (1850-1895) wrote in congratulation of friends on the birth of their son.¹²

We are glad to hear that you have a little son. There is no good thing that we are not wishing may befall him and you. Now when we have a little daughter, we shall want to talk business with you; for next to having a son or a daughter, the best possession is a worthy son-in-law or daughter-in-law. So, living in hopes, and rejoicing with you in your fortune, we salute you affectionately and pray you to kiss little Sindbad for us twain.

Mabel Wagnalls Jones sent a copy of her book, "Stars of the Opera," to O. Henry—Sidney W. Porter (1862-1910)—and he wrote her this letter of acknowledgment on October 28, 1907.¹³ Mrs. Jones had dedicated her book

*To those who love music but have no
opportunity of familiarizing themselves
with grand opera*

Your publishers sent me your latest book some days ago, and your card accompanying it leads me to suspect that you instigated the deed.

I am sure proud to get it; and have waited a few days before writing in order to send with my acknowledgment my latest volume of poor, insignificant, tiresome, unworthy, dull, pusillanimous, insufferable stories.

(Of course you understand that the adjectives are hypocritical.)

I am going to read *Stars of the Opera* carefully, and use the information in my conversation to gain a "rep" as a musical critic without having to go through the work of listening to the music.

I feel that I am one of the dedicatees of your book, and that the printer has been in error, and that it should read "To those who love musicians but have no opportunity to familiarize themselves with writers of grand opera."

Oh, those proof-readers!

The interesting point about the following letter, written on Election Day, 1912, to President-elect Woodrow Wilson by Walter Hines Page, is that it was written in the faith and confidence of

¹² Used by permission of Little, Brown, and Company.

¹³ From *Letters to Lithopolis*, by Mabel Wagnalls. Copyright 1922. Doubleday, Doran, and Company, Inc.

*Wilson's worthy leadership and deserved success before its author had heard the election returns. The congratulations were due no matter what happened!*¹⁴

My dear Mr. President-elect:

Before going into town to hear the returns, I write you my congratulations. Even if you were defeated, I should still congratulate you on putting a Presidential campaign on a higher level than it has ever before reached since Washington's time. Your grip became firmer and your sweep wider every week. It was inspiring to watch the unfolding of the deep meaning of it and to see the people's grasp of the main idea. It was fairly, highly, freely won, and now we enter the Era of Great Opportunity. It is hard to measure the extent or the thrill of the new interest in public affairs and the new hope that you have aroused in thousands of men who were becoming hopeless under the long-drawn-out reign of privilege.

To the big burden of suggestions that you are receiving, may I add these small ones?

1 Call Congress in extra session mainly to revise the tariff and incidentally to prepare the way for rural credit societies.

The time is come when the land must be developed by the new agriculture and farming made a business. This calls for money. Every acre will repay a reasonable loan on long time at a fair interest rate, and group-borrowing develops the men quite as much as the men will develop the soil. It saved the German Empire and is remaking Italy. And this is the proper use of much of the money that now flows into the reach of the credit barons. This building up of farm life will restore the equilibrium of our civilization and, besides, will prove to be one half the solution of our currency and credit problem.

2 Set your trusted friends immediately to work, every man in the field he knows best, to prepare briefs for you on such great subjects and departments as the Currency, the Post Office, Conservation, Rural Credit, the Agricultural Department, which has the most direct power for good to the most people—to make our farmers as independent as Denmark's and to give our best country folk the dignity of the old-time English gentleman—this expert, independent information to compare with your own knowledge and with official reports.

3 The President reads (or speaks) his Inaugural to the people. Why not go back to the old custom of himself delivering his Messages to Congress? Would that not restore a feeling of comradeship in responsibility and make the Legislative branch feel nearer to the Executive? Every President of our time has sooner or later got away with Congress.

I cannot keep from saying what a new thrill of hope and tingle of expectancy I feel—as of a great event about to happen for our country and for the restoration of popular government; for you will keep your rudder true.

¹⁴ Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

*When Dr. Frank P. Graves was appointed Commissioner of Education in the State of New York to succeed Dr. John H. Finley, who left this high educational office to join The New York Times editorial staff, he received from Doctor Finley this fine congratulatory tribute, under date of June 29, 1921:*¹⁵

If I were as well qualified for the position to which you have been elected as you are, I think I should not have let you be my successor so soon. As it is I am now sure that I have done the best for all concerned: I am in a place where I can be more serviceable to my own day and generation—and you can do more in the position which I have left. Together we ought to be doing more than twice as much as each was doing in his old position. My service has been chiefly to magnify positions so that more competent men will take them. I think that I may assume that I have succeeded once more.

I subscribe myself (as I shall soon come to be known) as

Your predecessor

Employees sometimes complain that good work is not more frequently approved with enthusiasm by employers. One employer, at least, deserves to be excepted from this complaint—the one, for instance, who sent the following congratulatory letter to a field man:

The other day while the members of our firm were in executive session I was abruptly summoned before them. To say that I was flabbergasted is to do my feelings injustice. I was panic-stricken!

But what do you suppose they wanted? First, to know the name of the man who is doing such remarkable work in the _____ territory. Second, to order him congratulated and given a bonus!

You are hereby, herein, and herewith CONGRATULATED, Dave Richman, and with all the heart I am able to convey. And you are hereby, herein, and herewith PRESENTED WITH A CHECK, a bonus voted by the executives themselves—a bonus of four figures to the left of the decimal point!

All of which makes me feel pretty cheap. I should have done or recommended all of this in the first place, openly and directly. I should have gone to them voluntarily to do it, instead of letting them find out for themselves in my report.

So, you're getting a letter of apology as well as congratulation. And as far as I'm concerned the apology is the more touching of the two. I found you. I placed you in that territory; and I should have been the first to reward you, especially since you have made a success of a place that five men had previously failed in.

¹⁵ Used by permission of Dr. John H. Finley.

And I'm making no excuses, except to say that I'm just a DUB, while you—YOU—DAVE RICIMAN—YOU'RE THE TOPS!

P.S. The Boss will write you personally in a day or two, he says.

COUNSEL

Advice is cheap and is usually ignored. These may be the reasons why there is so much of it, especially in letters. Its very momentum is essential to offset its wholesale neglect. Inasmuch as most of the letters in this section pertain to writing, their inclusion in a book of this kind may be important.

Philip Dormer Stanhope, the Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), was one of the great masters of the epistolary art, tho he is said never to have thought that his letters would be published. Many of his best ones were written to his son for that young man's personal and social improvement. If they had achieved only this, their author would have felt himself amply rewarded. He himself seemed to hold some doubts, however, whether the progeny would benefit by the "prodigious quantity of manure which had been spread upon him" (his own words). The following letter was written on September 27, 1748. The salutation is "Dear Boy," the complimentary closing "Adieu." This is but one of many letters of the same length or longer containing advice on dress, fashion, behavior, writing, and like subjects. Any boy who could have absorbed all the advice would have been a prodigy.

I have received your Latin Lecture upon War, which, though it is not exactly the same Latin that Cæsar, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid spoke, is, however, as good Latin as the erudite Germans speak or write! I have always observed that the most learned people, that is, those who have read the most Latin, write the worst; and that distinguishes the Latin of a gentleman scholar from that of a pedant. A gentleman has probably read no other Latin than that of the Augustan age; and therefore can write no other whereas the pedant has read much more bad Latin than good, and consequently writes so too. He looks upon the best classical books, as books for school-boys, and consequently below him; but pores over fragments of obscure authors, treasures up the obsolete words which he meets with there, and uses them upon all occasions, to show his reading, at the expense of his judgment. Plautus is his favourite author, not for the sake of the wit and the *vis comica* of his comedies, but upon account of the many obsolete words, and the cant of low characters, which are to be met with no where else. He will rather use *illi* than *illî*, *optumê* than *optimê*, and any bad word rather than any good one, provided he can but prove that, strictly speaking, it is Latin; that is, that it was written by a Roman. By this rule, I might now write to you in the language of Chaucer or Spenser, and assert that

I wrote English, because it was English in those days; but I should be a most affected puppy if I did so, and you would not understand three words of my letter. All these, and such-like affected peculiarities, are the characteristics of learned coxcombs and pedants, and are carefully avoided by all men of sense.

Your letters, except when upon a given subject, are exceedingly laconic, and answer neither my desires, nor the purpose of letters; which should be familiar conversations between absent friends. As I desire to live with you upon the footing of an intimate friend, and not of a parent, I could wish that your letters gave me more particular accounts of yourself, and of your lesser transactions. When you write to me, suppose yourself conversing freely with me, by the fireside. In that case, you would naturally mention the incidents of the day; as where you had been, whom you had seen, what you thought of them, etc. Do this in your letters; acquaint me sometimes with your studies; sometimes with your diversions; tell me of any new persons and characters that you meet in company, and add your own observations upon them; in short, let me see more of you in your letters.

How do you go on with Lord Pulteney; and how does he go on at Leipzig? Has he learning, has he parts, has he application? Is he good or ill-natured? In short, what is he, at least, what do you think of him? You may tell me without reserve, for I promise you secrecy. You are now of an age, that I am desirous of beginning a confidential correspondence with you; and, as I shall, on my part, write you very freely my opinion on men and things, which I should often be very unwilling that anybody but you or Mr. Harte should see; so, on your part, if you write me without reserve, you may depend upon my inviolable secrecy.

If you have ever looked into the letters of Madame de Sévigné to her daughter Madame de Grignan, you must have observed the ease, freedom, and friendship of that correspondence, and yet I hope, and believe, that they d'd not love one another better than we do. Tell me what books you are now reading, either by way of study or amusement; how you pass your evenings when at home, and where you pass them when abroad. I know you go sometimes to Madame Valentin's assembly. What do you there; do you play, or sup, or is it only *la belle conversation*? Do you mind your dancing, while your dancing-master is with you? As you will be often under the necessity of dancing a minuet, I would have you dance it very well. Remember that the graceful motion of the arms, the giving of the hand, and the putting on, and the pulling off of your hat genteelly, are the material parts of a gentleman's dancing. But the greatest advantage of dancing well, is, that it necessarily teaches you to present yourself, to sit, stand, and walk genteelly, all of which are of real importance to a man of fashion.

I should wish that you were polished, before you go to Berlin; where, as you will be in a great deal of good company, I would have you have the right manners for it. It is a very considerable article to have *le ton de la bonne compagnie*, in your destination particularly. The principal business of a foreign minister is, to get into the secrets, and to know all *les allures* of the Courts at which he resides; this he can never bring about, but by such a pleasing address, such engag-

ing manners, and such an insinuating behaviour, as may make him sought for, and in some measure domestic, in the best company and the best families of the place. He will, then, indeed, be well informed of all that passes; either by the confidences made him, or by the carelessness of people in his company: who are accustomed to look upon him as one of them, and consequently (are) not upon their guard before him. For a Minister, who only goes to the Court he resides at in form, to ask an audience of the Prince or the Minister, upon his last instructions, puts them upon their guard, and will never know anything more than what they have a mind that he should know. Here women may be put to some use. A King's mistress, or a Minister's wife or mistress, may give great and useful information; and are very apt to do it, being proud to show that they have been trusted. But then, in this case, the height of that sort of address which strikes women, is requisite; I mean that easy politeness, graceful and genteel address, and that *extérieur brillant*, which they cannot withstand. There is a sort of men so like women, that they are to be taken just in the same way—I mean those who are commonly called *fine men*, who swarm at all Courts—who have little reflection, and less knowledge; but who, by their good breeding and *train-train* of the world, are admitted into all companies; and, by the imprudence or carelessness of their superiors, pick up secrets worth knowing, and easily got out of them by proper address.

The following letter was written by Chesterfield to his son on September 5, 1748. The young man was then in his seventeenth¹⁸ year, on the threshold of the period, his father considered, when he should be advised regarding the "correct way to view and to treat womankind." In spite of all the advice (perhaps because of it!) that was showered upon him, Philip Stanhope II disappointed and grieved his father. When the son died at the age of thirty-six the Chesterfieldian tradition of "brilliant manners and glamorous suavity" received a shock upon learning that the boy had for some time been secretly married to a woman below his station.

As women are a considerable, or at least a pretty numerous, part of company, and as their suffrages go a great way toward establishing a man's character in the fashionable part of the world—which is of great importance to the fortune and figure he proposes to make in it—it is necessary to please them. I will therefore, upon this subject, let you into certain *arcana*,¹⁶ that will be very useful for you to know, but which you must with the utmost care conceal, and never seem to know.

Women, then, are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle and sometimes wit, but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. Some little passion or humor always breaks in upon their best resolutions. Their beauty neglected or controverted, their age increased, or their supposed

¹⁸ Secrets.

understandings depreciated instantly kindles their little passions, and overturns any system of consequential conduct that in their most reasonable moments they might have been capable of forming. A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humors and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters, though he often makes them believe that he does both—which is the thing in the world that they are proud of; for they love mightily to be dabbling in business—which, by the way, they always spoil—and, being justly distrustful that men in general look upon them in a trifling light, they almost adore that man who talks more seriously to them, and who seems to consult them—I say, who seems, for weak men really do, but wise ones only seem to do it.

No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest, and gratefully accept of the lowest; and you may safely flatter any woman, from her understanding down to the exquisite taste of her fan. Women who are either indisputably beautiful or indisputably ugly are best flattered upon the score of their understandings; but those who are in a state of mediocrity are best flattered upon their beauty, or at least their graces; for every woman who is not absolutely ugly thinks herself handsome, but, not hearing often that she is so, is the more grateful and the more obliged to the few who tell her so; whereas a decided and conscious beauty looks upon every tribute paid to her beauty only as her due, but wants to shine and to be considered on the side of her understanding; and a woman who is ugly enough to know that she is so, knows that she has nothing left but her understanding, which is consequently—and probably in more senses than one—her weak side.

But these are secrets that you must keep inviolably, if you would not, like Orpheus,¹⁷ be torn to pieces by the whole sex. On the contrary, a man who thinks of living in the great world must be gallant, polite, and attentive to please the women. They have, from the weakness of men, more or less influence in all courts, they absolutely stamp every man's character in the *beau monde*,¹⁸ and make it either current, or cry it down and stop it in payments. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to manage, please, and flatter them, and never to discover the least marks of contempt, which is what they never forgive.

Chesterfield wrote this note to Mrs. Ann Kirkby whose clergyman son he had accommodated with the living at Burton. Mrs. Kirkby always felt an obligation for his granting this favor, the more so, perhaps, since he wrote her at the time that he found nothing very bad in the young man's character, and yet nothing very edifying in it.

¹⁷ The husband of Eurydice. After her death he scorned the advances of the Thracian women, and for this they tore him to pieces.

¹⁸ Polite world.

Madam.

London Feb. 9th 1766.

I am to thank you now for your kind annual present which I received very safe and good last week; it was but the more welcome for the seeming disappointment, as disappointments often increase the pleasure of possession at last, so little do we know what is best for ourselves. I am with great truth

Madam

Your most faithful
humble servant

Christopher

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) wrote as follows on December 8, 1763, to James Boswell who was at the University of Utrecht studying civil law. This was the year in which he had met Boswell, who for the next twenty years was to be so closely associated with him. The gentleman referred to in the fifth paragraph is Boswell himself.

You are not to think yourself forgotten, or criminally neglected, that you have had yet no letter from me. I love to see my friends, to hear from them, to talk to them, and to talk of them, but it is not without a considerable effort of resolution that I prevail upon myself to write. I would not, however, gratify my own indolence by the omission of any important duty, or any office of real kindness.

To tell you that I am or am not well, that I have or have not been in the country, that I drank your health in the room in which we last sat together, and that your acquaintance continue to speak of you with their former kindness, topics with which those letters are commonly filled which are written only for the sake of writing, I

seldom shall think worth communicating; but if I can have it in my power to calm any harassing disquiet, to excite any virtuous desire, to rectify any important opinion, or fortify any generous resolution, you need not doubt but I shall at least wish to prefer the pleasure of gratifying a friend much less esteemed than yourself, before the gloomy calm of idle vacancy. Whether I shall easily arrive at an exact punctuality of correspondence, I cannot tell. I shall, at present, expect that you will receive this in return for two which I have had from you. The first, indeed, gave me an account so hopeless of the state of your mind, that it hardly admitted or deserved an answer; by the second I was much better pleased; and the pleasure will still be increased by such a narrative of the progress of your studies, as may evince the continuance of an equal and rational application of your mind to some useful inquiry.

You will, perhaps, wish to ask, what study I would recommend. I shall not speak of theology, because it ought not to be considered as a question whether you shall endeavour to know the will of God.

I shall, therefore, consider only such studies as we are at liberty to pursue or to neglect; and of these I know not how you will make a better choice, than by studying the civil law as your father advises, and the ancient languages, as you had determined for yourself; at least resolve, while you remain, in any settled residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day amongst your books. The dissipation of thought of which you complain, is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break away without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

There lurks, perhaps, in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that Nature has given him something peculiar to himself. This vanity makes one mind nurse aversion, and another actuate desires, till they rise by art much above their original state of power; and as affectation in time improves to habit, they at last tyrannize over him who at first encouraged them only for show. Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who, while he was chill, was harmless; but when warmth gave him strength, exerted it in poison. You know a gentleman, who, when first he set his foot in the gay world, as he prepared himself to whirl in the vortex of pleasure, imagined a total indifference and universal negligence to be the most agreeable concomitants of youth, and the strongest indication of an airy temper and a quick apprehension. Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius; and hoped that he should appear to attain, amidst all the ease of carelessness, and all the tumult of diversion, that knowledge and those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabric obtain only by mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life awhile, was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue, he then wished to return to his studies; and finding long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to be cured

than he expected, still willing to retain his claim to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable decree of destiny, and concluded that Nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts for ever. Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study tomorrow; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before.

This, my dear Boswell, is advice which, perhaps, has been often given you, and given you without effect. But this advice, if you will not take from others, you must take from your own reflections, if you purpose to do the duties of the station to which the bounty of Providence has called you.

Let me have a long letter from you as soon as you can. I hope you continue your journal, and enrich it with many observations upon the country in which you reside. It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language, and can inquire how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate servant,

To his good friend William Unwin, the poet William Cowper (1731-1800) spoke his mind about letter writing, among other subjects. He had once written to Unwin that he thought Pope the "most disagreeable maker of epistles that I ever met with." He himself aimed "not to point every sentence with a conceit, but to write sensibly only his uppermost thoughts." In this letter of August 6, 1780, he seems to have succeeded. The note of pessimism at the end is characteristic of Cowper (see page 76).

You like to hear from me: this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say; this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet, if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me, "Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in; have you resolved never to speak again?" it would be but a poor reply, if, in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it;

for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it.

So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted, or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say, "My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so, good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns, in the meantime, to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead, as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edging, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their tastes, should resemble us in anything else. But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk-stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of the man, at least, has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear, perhaps, a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but in every other respect a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

Sydney Smith (1771-1845) advised his son, Douglas, in regard to history and poetry, and other things, as he left home for school.

Concerning this Mr. —, I would not have you put any trust in him, for he is not trustworthy; but so live with him as if one day or other he were to be your enemy. With such a character as his, this is a necessary precaution.

In the time you can give to English reading you should consider what it is most needful to have, what it is most shameful to want—shirts and stockings before frills and collars. Such is the history of your own country, to be studied in Hume, then in Rapin's *History of England*, with Tindal's *Continuation*. Hume takes you to the end of James the Second, Rapin and Tindal will carry you to the end of Anne. Then, Coxe's *Life of Sir Robert Walpole* and the *Duke of Marlborough*; and these read with attention to dates and geography. Then, the history of the other three or four enlightened nations in Europe. For the English poets, I will let you off at present with

Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Shakespeare; and remember, always in books keep the best company. Don't read a line of Ovid, till you have mastered Virgil; nor a line of Thomson, till you have exhausted Pope; nor of Massinger, till you are familiar with Shakespeare.

I am glad you liked your box and its contents. Think of us as we think of you; and send us the most acceptable of all presents—the information that you are improving in all particulars.

The greatest of all human mysteries are the Westminster holidays. If you can get a peep behind the curtain, pray let us know immediately the day of your coming home.

We have had about three or four ounces of rain here; that is all. I heard of your being wet through in London, and envied you very much. The whole of this parish is pulverised from long and excessive drought. Our whole property depends upon the tranquillity of the winds: if it blow before it rains, we shall all be up in the air in the shape of dust, and we shall be *transparished* we know not where. God bless you, my dear boy! I hope we shall soon meet at Lydiard

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) penned this letter to his youngest son, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, when in 1868 the young man left his home in England to go on his own in Australia:

I write this note today because your going away is much upon my mind, and because I want you to have a few parting words from me to think of now and then at quiet times. I need not tell you that I love you dearly, and am very, very sorry in my heart to part with you. But this life is half made up of partings, and these pains must be borne. It is my comfort and my sincere conviction that you are going to try the life for which you are best fitted. I think its freedom and wildness more suited to you than any experiment in a study or office would ever have been; and without that training, you could have followed no other suitable occupation.

What you have already wanted until now has been a set, steady, constant purpose. I therefore exhort you to persevere in a thorough determination to do whatever you have to do as well as you can do it. I was not so old as you are now when I first had to win my food, and do this out of this determination, and I have never slackened in it since.

Never take a mean advantage of any one in any transaction, and never be hard upon people who are in your power. Try to do to others, as you would have them do to you, and do not be discouraged if they fail sometimes. It is much better for you that they should fail in obeying the greatest rule laid down by our Saviour, than that you should.

I put a New Testament among your books, for the very same reasons, and with the very same hopes that made me write an easy account of it for you, when you were a little child; because it is the best book that ever was or will be known in the world, and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty can possibly be guided.

As your brothers have gone away, one by one, I have written to each such words as I am now writing to you, and have entreated them all to guide themselves by this book, putting aside the interpretations and inventions of men.

You will remember that you have never at home been wearied about religious observances for mere formalities. I have always been anxious not to weary my children with such things before they are old enough to form opinions respecting them. You will therefore understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion, as it came from Christ Himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it.

Only one thing more on this head. The more we are in earnest as to feeling it, the less we are disposed to hold forth about it. Never abandon the wholesome practice of saying your private prayers, night and morning. I have never abandoned it myself, and I know the comfort of it.

I hope you will always be able to say in after life, that you had a kind father. You cannot show your affection for him so well, or make him so happy, as by doing your duty.

Charles Dickens wrote in the following facetious vein to his old actor-friend, William Charles Macready (see page 106), on May 24, 1851, just after Macready had retired to the country. Inasmuch as the actor-manager was born and had lived in London for half a century, few people knew their London better. The play referred to is Bulwer-Lytton's "Not so Bad as We Seem," an amateur performance for charity, in which Dickens was appearing.

We are getting in a good heap of money for the Guild. The comedy has been very much improved, in many respects, since you read it. The scene to which you refer is certainly one of the most telling in the play. And there is a farce to be produced on Tuesday next, wherein a distinguished amateur will sustain a variety of assumption-parts, and in particular, Samuel Weller and Mrs. Gamp, of which I say no more. I am pining for Broadstairs, where the children are at present. I lurk from the sun, during the best part of the day, in a villainous compound of darkness, canvas, sawdust, general dust, stale gas (involving a vague smell of pepper), and disenchanted properties. But I hope to get down on Wednesday or Thursday.

Ah! you country gentlemen, who live at home at ease, how little do you think of us among the London fleas! But they tell me you are coming in for Dorsetshire. You must be very careful, when you come to town to attend to your parliamentary duties, never to ask your way of people in the streets. They will misdirect you for what the vulgar call "a lark," meaning, in this connection, a jest at your expense. Always go into some respectable shop or apply to a policeman. You will know him by his being dressed in blue, with very

dull silver buttons, and by the top of his hat being made of sticking-plaster. You may perhaps see in some odd place an intelligent-looking man, with a curious little wooden table before him and three thimbles on it. He will want you to bet, but don't do it. He really desires to cheat you. And don't buy at auctions where the best plated goods are being knocked down for next to nothing. These, too, are delusions. If you wish to go to the play to see real good acting (though a little more subdued than perfect tragedy should be), I would recommend you to see — at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Anybody will show it to you. It is near the Strand, and you may know it by seeing no company whatever at any of the doors. Cab fares are eight-pence a mile. A mile London measure is half a Dorsetshire mile, recollect. Porter is twopence per pint; what is called stout is four-pence. The Zoological Gardens are in the Regent's Park, and the price of admission is one shilling. Of the streets, I would recommend you to see Regent Street and the Quadrant, Bond Street, Piccadilly, Oxford Street, and Cheapside. I think these will please you after a time, though the tumult and hustle will at first bewilder you. If I can serve you in any way, pray command me. And with my best regards to your happy family, so remote from this Babel,

Believe me, my dear Friend,
Ever affectionately yours,

P.S. I forgot to mention just now that the black equestrian figure you will see at Charing Cross, as you go down to the House, is a statue of *King Charles the First*.

Very important indeed was the advice that James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) wrote to William Dean Howells on December 21, 1882. It was important not only for Howells, but it is important for every young person today who is facing toward a career, as every young person should be.

I was very glad to get your letter, though it put me under bonds to be wiser than I have ever had the skill to be. If I remember rightly, Panurge's doubts were increased by consulting the Oracle, but how did the Oracle feel? Did it ever occur to you that a certain share of our sympathy should go in that direction?

My best judgment is this, and like all good judgment it is to a considerable degree on both sides of the question. If you are able now, without overworking mind or body, to keep the wolf from the door and to lay by something for a rainy day—and I mean, of course, without being driven to work with your left hand because the better one is tired out—I should refuse the offer, or should hesitate to accept it. If you are a systematic worker, independent of moods, and sure of your genius whenever you want it, there might be no risk in accepting. You would have the advantage of a fixed income to fall back on. Is this a greater advantage than the want of it would be as a spur to industry? Was not the occasion of Shakespeare's plays (I don't say the motive of 'em) that he *had* to write? And are any of us likely to be better inspired than he? Does not inspiration, in some limited sense at least, come with the exercise

thereof, as the appetite with eating? Is not your hand better for keeping it in, as they say?

A professorship takes a great deal of time, and, if you teach in any more direct way than by lectures, uses up an immense stock of nerves. Your inevitable temptation (in some sort your duty) will be to make yourself *learned*—which you haven't the least need to be as an author (if you only have me at your elbow to correct your English now and then, naughty boy!). If you can make your professorship a thing apart—but can you and be honest? I believe the present generation doesn't think I was made for a poet, but I think I could have gone nearer convincing 'em if I had not estranged the muse by donning a professor's gown. I speak of myself because you wanted my experience. I am naturally indolent, and being worked pretty hard in the College, was willing to be content with the amount of work that was squeezed out of me by my position, and let what my nature might otherwise have forced me into go. As I said before, if you can reckon on your own temperament, accept. If you have a doubt, *don't*. I think you will divine what I am driving at.

I find everybody here reading your books, and you know very well how much pleasure that gives me. They wish to see you, and I hope when you come back you will stay and let 'em do it. I wish you could know my hostess, for instance—noble in all senses of the word. I am staying here for a few days with a large party in a house as big as a small town, and a beautiful country of hill and dale and gray birch woods. Enough to say that there was once a convent here. The monks always had an eye for country.

You will have to be very fine when you show yourself in England, to look like the portrait I have painted of you—but I am willing to take the venture.

Inexorable lunch has sounded, and I must say goodbye. I should say, on the whole—it is safe to ask my advice, but not to follow it. But then, people never do.

Robert Louis Stevenson set down in a letter to William Archer "the only test I know of writing." It was written at Saranac Lake, New York, in the winter of 1888.¹⁹

Pretty sick in bed: but necessary to protest and continue your education

Why was Jenkin an amateur in my eyes? You think because not amusing (I think he often was amusing). The reason is this: I never, or almost never, saw two pages of his work that I could not have put in one without the smallest loss of material. That is the only test I know of writing. If there is anywhere a thing said in two sentences that could have been as clearly and as engagingly and as forcibly said in one, then it's amateur work. Then you will bring me up with old Dumas. Nav, the object of a story is to be long, to fill up hours; the story-teller's art of writing is to water out by continual invention, historical and technical, and yet not seem to water; seem on the other hand to practise that same wit of conspicuous and declaratory condensation which is the proper art of

¹⁹ Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

writing. That is one thing in which my stories fail: I am always cutting the flesh off their bones.

I would rise from the dead to preach!

Hope all well. I think my wife better, but she's not allowed to write; and this (only wrung from me by desire to Boss and Parsonise and Dominate, strong in sickness) is my first letter for days, and will likely be my last for many more. Not blame my wife for her silence: doctor's orders. All much interested by your last, and fragment from brother, and anecdotes of Tomarcher.—The sick but still Moral

P.S. Tell Shaw to hurry up: I want another.

*Edward Bok (1863-1930) once had an interesting talk with Mark Twain and, with the humorist's permission, wrote an account of it. He submitted it to Twain for check-up and approval before publication. This is the interesting if not altogether encouraging reply that Bok received from the author of "Tom Sawyer":*²⁰

No, no—it is like most interviews, pure twaddle, and valueless.

For several quite plain and simple reasons, an "interview" must, as a rule, be an absurdity. And chiefly for this reason: it is an attempt to use a boat on land, or a wagon on water, to speak figuratively. Spoken speech is one thing, written speech is quite another. Print is a proper vehicle for the latter, but it isn't for the former. The moment "talk" is put into print you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its soul. You have nothing but a dead carcass left on your hands. Color, play of feature, the varying modulations of voice, the laugh, the smile, the informing inflections, everything that gave that body warmth, grace, friendliness, and charm, and commended it to your affection, or at least to your tolerance, is gone, and nothing is left, but a pallid, stiff, and repulsive cadaver.

Such is "talk," almost invariably, as you see it lying in state in an "interview." The interviewer seldom tries to tell one *how* a thing was said; he merely puts in the naked remark, and stops there. When one writes for print, his methods are very different. He follows forms which have but little resemblance to conversation, but they make the reader understand what the writer is trying to convey. And when the writer is making a story, and finds it necessary to report some of the talk of his characters, observe how cautiously and anxiously he goes at that risky and difficult thing:

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said Alfred, taking a mock heroic attitude, and casting an arch glance upon the company, "blood would have flowed."

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said Hawkwood, with that in his eye which caused more than one heart in that guilty assemblage to quake, "blood would have flowed."

²⁰ Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

"If he had dared to say that thing in my presence," said the paltry blusterer, with valor on his tongue and pallor on his lips, "blood would have flowed."

So painfully aware is the novelist that naked talk in print conveys no meaning, that he loads, and often overloads, almost every utterance of his characters with explanations and interpretations. It is a loud confession that print is a poor vehicle for "talk"; it is a recognition that uninterpreted talk in print would result in confusion to the reader, not instruction.

Now, in your interview you have certainly been most accurate, you have set down the sentences I uttered as I said them. But you have not a word of explanation; what my manner was at several points is not indicated. Therefore, no reader can possibly know where I was in earnest and where I was joking; or whether I was joking altogether or in earnest altogether. Such a report of a conversation has no value. It can convey many meanings to the reader, but never the right one. To add interpretations which would convey the right meaning is a something which would require—what? An art so high and fine and difficult that no possessor of it would ever be allowed to waste it on interviews.

No; spare the reader and spare me; leave the whole interview out; it is rubbish. I wouldn't talk in my sleep if I couldn't talk better than that.

If you wish to print anything print this letter; it may have some value, for it may explain to a reader here and there why it is that in interviews as a rule men seem to talk like anybody but themselves.

The letter below was written by a business man of national reputation, to his son who was just entering upon his freshman year. Identity is kept confidential at request of the writer. But this letter was printed and widely circulated during the young man's college career, and while it was merely an intimate personal letter when it was first sent thru the mails, it has now deservedly become more or less a public or semi-public document.

It is customary, I know, for the younger generation—now romantically known as "flaming youth"—to regard the old business morality as silly and foolish. Perhaps this is right. Perhaps this so-called new era of the radio and the talkie and the airplane has brought with it short-cut disregard of such homely virtues as punctuality, keeping one's promises, paying one's bills doing a little bit more perhaps than one's job actually demands. But I don't think so, and I know a great many good people who don't think so.

The other day I invited a young college graduate to have lunch with me. He has been out of college now almost a year and he has been writing to me about giving him a job. I knew his parents, both dead now, and, while I have no opening for him, I thought it my duty to see him for their sake as well as for his own. He appeared at the

luncheon table exactly forty minutes late, and greeted me thus, "Sorry, Old Boy, got held up by a guy that wanted to touch me for some dough, broke as I am"! I'm about forty years his senior. But never mind that. The point is—my fear is—that he is typical and that his behavior is ominous of evil days to come.

We have in our store library only one copy of a certain book that happens to be rather popular with our employees. When one employee the other day returned it almost a week overdue, our librarian reproved him a little and showed him the waiting list. He also told him the old story of Lincoln's walking several miles to return a book on time. The only reaction on the part of the delinquent was this flippancy, "The more fool, Lincoln!"

One of our salesmen placed a very large order not so long ago with a young man who was just opening a new business. The salesman frankly warned his inexperienced customer about the dangers of overstocking—an unprecedented thing for a salesman to do, you may think. Not always. But the point is this: That young optimistic beginner in the ways of trade replied to him: "Oh, I can always go into bankruptcy, if I can't make a go of it!" It was a joke then, of course, even tho it did show a certain kind of moral laxity. Well last week that young man actually did go into bankruptcy, and his creditors—we among the rest—will probably never be paid.

Now, I don't want you, of all people under the sun, to think of me as being fastidious or old-fogy or negligible because I am so nearly out of the picture. And I don't want you to be punctual and honest and solvent and industrious for *my* sake. I want you to be all these things for your own sake, and I want you so to use your college training, as to get them out of the next four years, get them deeply ingrained into your make-up, get them ineradicably incorporated into your mind and heart. For I do not believe that yet in your time the world will be ready to go entirely irresponsible and inconsiderate. I do not believe that the apparent, widespread carelessness in manners and morality on the part of the younger generation today will yet in your time be given the stamp of approval and become preferable in business practice to a sane, stable, wholesome, habitual respect for and observance of strict punctuality and honesty.

And if, being your father, I am too close to you for you to take this counsel quite seriously, I beg of you, look around you with discernment. Study the great businesses in the country and the greatest business men and women, and discover for yourself what qualities of human character have built highest and most enduring. You are to take a commercial degree from one of the oldest and most revered institutions in this country. Unless that degree is to mean something to you and to those with whom you must associate thru life, by way of solid and fundamental business ethics, I could wish you to "flunk out" (your own patois) before the end of your first month in residence there.

DECLINATION

It is not to be assumed that a negative letter—a letter that says *no*—necessarily has to be a dead letter. There are alive and

undiscouraging and constructive ways of saying *no*, of declining, of disagreeing. It may never be quite so easy to reply in the negative as in the affirmative—to be a *no*-man rather than a *yes*-man—but therein lies the challenge for the letter writer. Below are a few classic examples of letter declination that are deserving of study.

Elizabeth Simpson (1753-1821), dramatist and actress, wrote the following declination of a marriage offer by the painter and actor, Joseph Inchbald. She later yielded to his proposal, however, and as Mrs. Inchbald, became the author of nineteen plays and the editor of "The Modern Theatre" in ten volumes and "The British Theatre" in twenty-five volumes. She and her husband acted together for many years. This letter was written in 1771.

You see, Mr. Inchbald, I have complied with your request, by answering your letter immediately. Indeed, I was not a little disturbed at first sight of it, with wondering what new correspondent I had got; for as so many things of consequence had occurred since I saw the hand, it had really slipt my remembrance. You inquire whether the pleasures of Bury fair are not worn off? I must confess they are not; for although, like all others, they were intermixed with pains which at the time of enjoyment robbed 'em of the power of bestowing happiness, yet the recollection of 'em can bestow it: 'tis sweet, and not to be rivaled by any other, unless the delights of London, but they for some time have daily grown the weakest, which can easily be accounted for; for as that impression was first made, 'tis natural it will be first erased.

I find you have seen my thoughts on marriage; but, as you desire it, I will repeat them. In spite of your eloquent pen, matrimony still appears to me with less charms than terrors: the bliss arising from it, I doubt not, is superior to any other—but best not to be ventured for (in my opinion) till some little time have proved the emptiness of all other; which it seldom fails to do. But to enter into marriage with the least reluctance, as fearing you are going to sacrifice part of your time, must be greatly imprudent: fewer unhappy matches I think would be occasioned, if fewer persons were guilty of this indiscretion—an indiscretion that shocks me, and which I hope Heaven will ever preserve me from: as must be your wish, if the regard that you have professed for me be really mine, which I am not wholly undeserving of: for, as much as the strongest friendship can allow,

I am, yours,

The following letter, written by Robert Southey to Sir Robert Peel, declining a baronetcy that would have added three hundred pounds a year to his income, is worthy companion to the Carlyle letter below. Both are strong-personality letters and both are businesslike in tone. This one was written on February 3, 1835.

No communication has ever surprised me so much as that which I have this day had the honour of receiving from you. I may truly say, also, that none has ever gratified me more, though it makes me feel how difficult it is to serve any one who is out of the way of fortune. An unreserved statement of my condition will be the fittest and most respectful reply.

I have a pension of £200 conferred upon me through the good offices of my old friend and benefactor, Charles W. Wynn, when Lord Grenville went out of office; and I have the Laureateship. The salary of the latter was immediately appropriated, as far as it went, to a life insurance of £3000. This, with an earlier insurance of £1000, is the whole provision I have made for my family; and what remains of the pension after the annual payments are made, is the whole of my certain income. All beyond must be derived from my own industry. Writing for a livelihood, a livelihood is all that I have gained; for having also something better in view, and therefore never having courted popularity, nor written for the mere sake of gain, it has not been possible for me to lay by anything. Last year, for the first time in my life, I was provided with a year's expenditure beforehand. The exposition might suffice to show how utterly unbecoming and unwise it would be to accept the rank, which, so greatly to my honour, you have solicited for me, and which his Majesty would so graciously have conferred. But the tone of your letter encourages me to say more.

My life insurances have increased in value. With these, the produce of my library, my papers, and a posthumous edition of my works, there will probably be £12,000 for my family at my decease. Good fortune, with great exertions on the part of my surviving friends, might possibly extend this to £15,000, beyond which I do not dream of any possibility. I had bequeathed the whole to my wife, to be divided ultimately among our four children; and having thus provided for them, no man could have been more contented with his lot, nor more thankful to that Providence on whose especial blessing he knew that he was constantly, and as it were immediately, dependent for his daily bread.

But the confidence which I used to feel in myself is now failing. I was young, in health and heart, on my last birthday, when I completed my sixtieth year. Since then I have been shaken at the root. It has pleased God to visit me with the severest of all domestic afflictions, those alone excepted into which guilt enters. My wife, a true help-mate as ever man was blessed with, lost her senses a few months ago. She is now in a lunatic asylum; and broken sleep, and anxious thoughts, from which there is no escape in the night season, have made me feel how more than possible it is that a sudden stroke may deprive me of those faculties, by the exercise of which this poor family has hitherto been supported. Even in the event of my death, their condition would, by our recent calamity, be materially altered, for the worse; but if I were rendered helpless, all our available means would procure only a respite from actual distress.

Under these circumstances, your letter, sir, would in other times have encouraged me to ask for such an increase of pension as might relieve me from anxiety on this score. Now that lay sinecures are in fact

abolished, there is no other way by which a man can be served, who has no profession wherein to be promoted, and whom any official situation would take from the only employment for which the studies and the habits of forty years have qualified him. This way, I am aware, is not now to be thought of, unless it were practicable as part of a plan for the encouragement of literature; but to such a plan perhaps these times might not be unfavorable.

The length of this communication would require an apology, if its substance could have been compressed; but on such an occasion it seemed a duty to say what I have said; nor, indeed, should I deserve the kindness which you have expressed, if I did not explicitly declare how thankful I should be to profit by it.

I have the honour to remain,

With the sincerest respect,

Your most faithful and obliged servant,

This letter by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) to Benjamin Disraeli, declining an offer of the Grand Cross of the Bath and a pension, is, as would naturally be expected, a strongly individualistic composition. The date is December 29, 1874.

Yesterday, to my great surprise, I had the honour to receive your letter containing a magnificent proposal for my benefit, which will be memorable to me for the rest of my life. Allow me to say that the letter, both in purport and expression, is worthy to be called magnanimous and noble, that it is without example in my own poor history; and I think it is unexampled, too, in the history of governing persons towards men of letters at the present, as at any time; and that I will carefully preserve it as one of the things precious to memory and heart. A real treasure or benefit, independent of all results from it.

This said to yourself and reposed with many feelings in my own grateful mind, I have only to add that your splendid and generous proposals for my practical behoof, must not any of them take effect; that titles of honour are, in all degree of them, out of keeping with the tenour of my own poor existence hitherto in this epoch of the world, and would be an encumbrance, not a furtherance to me; that as to money, it has, after long years of rigorous and frugal, but also (thank God, and those who are gone before me) not degrading poverty, become in this latter time amply abundant, even superabundant, more of it, too, now a hindrance, not a help to me; so that royal or other bounty would be more than thrown away in my case; and in brief, that except the feeling of your fine and noble conduct on this occasion, which is a real and permanent possession, there cannot anything be done that would not now be a sorrow rather than a pleasure.

With thanks more than usually sincere,

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

It is a far call from the formal pink rejection slip to such a declination as the following. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) sent to William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1869), editor of The Cornhill Magazine, her poem "Lord Walter's Wife." Thackeray could not see his way clear to publishing it in Cornhill, and wrote her the following letter in rejection of it. Mrs. Browning, in a letter to her sister-in-law wrote: "Thackeray has turned me out of The Cornhill for indecency, but did it so prettily and kindly that I, who am forgiving, sent him another poem." The salutation of this letter is "My dear, kind Mrs. Browning" and the complimentary closing "Always yours." (See page 341 for Mrs. Browning's reply.)

Has Browning ever had an aching tooth which must come out (I don't say Mrs. Browning, for women are much more courageous)—a tooth which must come out, and which he has kept for months and months away from the dentist? I have had such a tooth a long time, and have sate down in this chair, and never had the courage to undergo the pull.

This tooth is an allegory (I mean *this* one). It's your poem that you sent me months ago, and who am I to refuse the poems of Elizabeth Browning and set myself up as a judge over her? I can't tell you how often I have been going to write and have failed. You see that our magazine is written not only for men and women but for boys, girls, infants, sucklings almost, and one of the best wives, mothers, women in the world writes some verses which I feel certain would be objected to by many of our readers. Not that the writer is not pure, and the moral most pure, chaste, and, right, but there are things my squeamish public will not hear on Monday, though on Sundays they listen to them without scruple. In your poem, you know, there is an account of unlawful passion, felt by a man for a woman, and though you write pure doctrine, and real modesty, and pure ethics, I am sure our readers would make an outcry, and so I have not published this poem.

To have to say no to my betters is one of the hardest duties I have, but I'm sure we must not publish your verses, and I go down on my knees before cutting my victim's head off, and say, "Madam, you know how I respect and regard you, Browning's wife and Penini's mother; and for what I am going to do I most humbly ask your pardon."

My girls send their very best regards and remembrances, and I am, dear Mrs. Browning,

"Unavoidably detained" from one of the brilliant literary salons for which Lord and Lady Holland were famous, William Makepeace Thackeray penned gracious regrets.

July 23. 36. Ouslow Sq.

Dear Lady Holland

I have only just returned home
from Oxford, and found your kind invitation.
I wish I had been here to accept it, and beg
to say my best respects to you & Lord Holland
on a very early day.

Very faithfully yours always

Wm. Thackeray.

When George Eliot died, Herbert Spencer requested Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) to use his considerable influence to have her body interred in Westminster Abbey. Huxley felt obliged to refuse this request, and did so in the following personality letter, under date of December 27, 1880.

Your telegram which reached me on Friday evening caused me great perplexity, inasmuch as I had just been talking to Morley, and agreeing with him that the proposal for a funeral in Westminster Abbey had a very questionable look to us, who desired nothing so much as that peace and honour should attend George Eliot to her grave.

It can hardly be doubted that the proposal will be bitterly opposed, possibly (as happened in Mill's case with less provocation), with the raking up of past histories, about which the opinion even of those who have least the desire or the right to be pharisaical is strongly divided, and which had better be forgotten.

With respect to putting pressure on the Dean of Westminster, I have to consider that he has some confidence in me, and before asking him to do something for which he is pretty sure to be violently assailed, I have to ask myself whether I really think it a right thing for a man in his position to do.

Now I cannot say I do. However much I may lament the circumstance, Westminster Abbey is a Christian Church and not a Pantheon, and the Dean thereof is officially a Christian priest, and we ask him to bestow exceptional Christian honours by this burial in the Abbey. George Eliot is known not only as a great writer, but as a person whose life and opinions were in notorious antagonism to Christian practice in regard to marriage, and Christian theory in regard to dogma. How am I to tell the Dean that I think he ought to read over the body of a person who did not repent of what the Church considers mortal sin, a service not one solitary proposition of which she would have accepted for truth while she was alive? How am I to urge him to do that which, if I were in his place, I should most emphatically refuse to do?

You tell me that Mrs. Cross wished for the funeral in the Abbey. While I desire to entertain the greatest respect for her wishes, I am very sorry to hear it. I do not understand the feeling which could create such a desire on any personal grounds, save those of affection, and the natural yearning to be near, even in death, those whom we have loved. And on public grounds the wish is still less intelligible to me. One cannot eat one's cake and have it too. Those who elect to be free in thought and deed must not hanker after the rewards, if they are to be so called, which the world offers to those who put up with its fetters.

Thus, however I look at the proposal, it seems to me to be a profound mistake, and I can have nothing to do with it.

I shall be deeply grieved if this resolution is ascribed to any other motives than those which I have set forth at greater length than I intended.

Walter Raleigh, Professor of English Literature at Magdalen College, Oxford, had been asked to deliver a lecture before the English Association at Glasgow. He was obliged to decline, and he did so in this facetious letter to John S. Phillimore on October 18, 1921.²¹

It can't be did. nohow. Not but what I'm nuts on keeping English proper. But I can't do all that traveling, not by a long chalk, me being pestered with teaching the young and seeing my book through

²¹ Used by permission of Lady Raleigh.

the press in London, which is called volume one of the history of the War in the Air and am having a lot of trouble with it.

Grammar's a poor thing though useful at times, but syntax is what you and me and all educated people ort to turn to and do our best for so as to get it good.

When I see the chance I'll come to Glasgow. The bother is, I haven't time to think about a lecture. Every one says just come and give an hour's talk, which is no more to you than a cat having kittens. But if a cat had to have tortoisoes for the Government between times at an office in London it wouldn't be altogether too simple. Which you may say is only a allegory and no good at all, but it is the terrible truth.

However, if I could set down in Glasgow to pass the time of day for a bit it wouldn't be me that would be the first to say damn, which is said too often and for the purposes of associated English is not polite. So wishing you all success and profit in getting English properly associated, which is the only proper thing to do, I venture to hope that nevertheless we may meet at some time over Shakespeare and the glasses, and if Shakespeare stays away just carry on with what is left owing to us being true Britons.

*On December 16, 1903, a certain religious organization, in convention assembled, unanimously petitioned William Alden Smith (1859-1920), then United States Congressman and later United States Senator from Michigan, to prepare a legislative bill to deprive Utah of statehood because of its election of Reed Smoot, a Mormon, to the United States Senate. Smoot had been legally elected and was already discharging his senatorial duties. Religious feeling was running high against him in certain sections of the country, and also against the Utah electorate; hence, the petition. Mr. Smith replied to the petition as follows:*²²

However desirable it may be to put Utah out of the Union on account of certain marital irregularities there practiced by certain gentlemen with billy-goat whiskers, yet I have to report to you that it is impossible on account of a ruling once made by Chief Justice Chase, worded as follows:

The United States of America is a union of states, indivisible, undividable, and perpetual.

Moreover you may recall that President Lincoln carried on a war to prevent certain states from peacefully seceding, and this being so, we cannot now compel a state to secede. Besides, even if it were possible to put Utah out of the Union on account of the questionable lives of some of her citizens, it would be a most dangerous precedent to establish, since, I am told, there are men in Detroit who live shady lives, and whose practices are slightly lavender.

²² Used by permission of William Alden Smith's daughter Mrs Richmond Temple.

If Utah were put out of the Union, why not put Michigan out on account of her double quota of fools, and amputate Indiana on account of the rogues who roost on the banks of the Wabash? And then, is Chicago desirable? Why not cut it out? And how about the Rev. What's-his-Name of Ohio, and all those people Parkhurst tells us of in New York!

The real fact is that if you put out of the Union all of the states where there are bad men, we should have only Massachusetts and Connecticut left. And, in confidence, I know one representative from Connecticut who is not all that he should be. I agree with you that Smoot should be smit, but regretfully return your resolution, and have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

Early in 1929, Harrods of London, a large department store, requested Arnold Bennett, George Bernard Shaw, and H. G. Wells to lend the influence of their pens to the cause of business by writing an account of the big store—what it sold and how it conducted its business—the purpose being to use the write-ups as advertisements in newspapers. All three declined to contribute to any such linking of commerce and literature, and each one wrote a letter of declination. Harrods, by permission and without comment, published these replies as full-page advertisements.²³

Arnold Bennett wrote as follows to Harrods (March 1929):²⁴

I have now fully considered your proposal that I should write, for the purposes of publicity, a signed article or series of articles dealing with such aspects of your business as might, on examination, especially appeal to me. I note that you would wish to give me a free hand as to both selection and treatment of topics, and that in particular you are quite ready to accept and to print adverse criticism as well as favourable criticism.

You remind me that, as is well known, your business is among the largest, most comprehensive, and most famous of its kind in the world. You say that it counts notably in the industrial and mercantile life of the community, that your regular staff comprises an immense and constantly increasing number of citizens of both sexes, and that you use every honest endeavour to be of commercial service to the community.

You say further that you buy the best available materials and commodities that research can procure, and that you employ the best organisers, technicians, artists, designers, architects, and craftsmen of every sort that you can discover.

Lastly, you suggest that you ought to be able to enlist the help of descriptive writers in the same category of excellence and prestige as your finest workers in the applied arts.

²³ The author is indebted to Mr. C. E. Wiles, sales manager of Harrods, for his kind assistance in supplying authentic copies of these letters.

²⁴ Used by permission of Eric S. Pinker and Adrienne Morrison, Inc.

On my side I will now tell you that as a writer I have always been keenly interested in the very impressive phenomenon of the big departmental store, regarded either as a picturesque spectacle, or as a living organism, or as a sociological portent. I am all in favour of the departmental store. I cannot keep my eyes off its window-displays, its crowds of customers, its army of employees. In Britain, America, France, and Germany I have studied its functioning as far as is possible to an outsider. As a theme for description it strongly appeals to me. I have written articles about it, and I have written a novel entirely about it. That novel, published many years ago, was inspired by the mere sight of your own premises when they were first erected. I agree with you that you ought to be able to enlist the help of whatever writers seem to you to be adequately equipped for the task you would set. I should like, of course under proper conditions, to accept your proposal; and I see no possible reason against my acceptance except one.

The reason is that public opinion in Britain is not yet ripe to approve the employment of responsible imaginative writers to whom it has granted a reputation in any scheme of publicity for a commercial concern. Personally I differ from public opinion in this matter; but the opinion exists and I will not flout it. In flouting it I should certainly lose caste, and I do not intend to lose caste by attempting to create a precedent which could result, for me, in nothing save a disadvantageous notoriety. The time must inevitably come, sooner or later, when the precedent will be created, and after it is established people will wonder why it should ever have met with opposition. But the creator of the precedent will not be myself.

I must therefore, with lively regret, decline your proposal.

*George Bernard Shaw wrote as follows to Harrods (March 1929):*²⁸

There is nothing new in what you call the linking of forces between the commercial and the literary world.

Callisthenes is one of the best known authors of the day; and the catalogues of Fortnum and Mason are treasured by collectors and are read by me with delight, and with just that watering of the mouth that they are intended to provoke.

But long before these two triumphs of commercial literature were thought of, there was a secret alliance between the two forces. When I was a beginner those members of my profession who were journalists as well as writers of books were, I regret to say, unashamed and inveterate cadgers. They flourished their connection with the press not only in the theatre box offices as an excuse for demanding free admissions (orders, they used to be called) but in hotels and shops as a reason for allowing them substantial discounts or even not charging them anything.

I do not know which was the more amazing: the effrontery with which this blackmail was levied or the credulity with which it was submitted to. The consideration was called a puff; and editors were

²⁸ Used by permission of Mr. George Bernard Shaw.

always on the watch to defeat the efforts of their contributors to slip them into the paper, though these same editors would pay their own hotel bills with puffs.

When what was called "the new journalism" began with interviews, then considered a startling and highly questionable innovation, the gentleman or lady who interviewed you admired the ornaments on your mantelpiece and remarked that the Countess of So-and-So, on being interviewed the week before, had very kindly presented the interviewer with some trifle or other (worth five pounds or so) and didn't you think that was very nice of her? As to the lunches at the press views at the picture galleries, and the suppers on the stage at the Lyceum Theatre on first nights, they were so completely a matter of course that I doubt if they counted for as much in the subsequent press notices as they cost.

All this puffery and cadging went on underground; and though my elders not only had no scruples about it, but actually insisted on it as an appanage of their literary dignity, I could not bring myself to practise it or to regard it otherwise than as corrupt and personally dishonourable.

It was not through literature that it suddenly came to the surface and became a legitimate department of art. When Millais was at the height of his fame as a painter a very popular picture of his, representing a nice little boy blowing bubbles, was bought by the firm of Pears, and used and reproduced as an advertisement. The Academy was shocked; but Millais took no notice; the advertisement had an enormous vogue; and advertising entered on its present phase, in which it is a matter of course for commercial firms to employ the best available artistic and literary talent to advertise their wares and services. There is no reason on earth why they should not, and every reason why they should, now that the art of selling has so much more importance than the routine of production. But there are obvious limitations. Suppose for the sake of illustration that litigation arises between Harrods and Selfridges. Nobody would question the right of both litigants to engage the strongest bar they could get to plead their case. Nobody would question the propriety of the conduct of the most eminent barristers in accepting the briefs. But if the two great firms were to bid against one another for the favourable consideration of the judge, or to inform the jury that a certain verdict would be suitably rewarded, the fat would be in the fire at once, and the two litigants in gaol.

Similarly, if I, having had my first publicly performed play advertised by a poster designed by Aubrey Beardsley (now much sought after by collectors), were to offer the President of the Royal Academy two thousand guineas for a poster to advertise my next play, there would be nothing whatever questionable either in the offer or its acceptance.

But if I were to intimate to, say, Mr. St. John Ervine and Mr. Harris Deans that in the event of their notices of my play being sufficiently flattering to be usefully quoted as advertisements I should be prepared to buy the copyright from them for £500 apiece, then Heaven knows what would happen. Probably both gentlemen would refuse to notice my play at all, and would say why.

Both gentlemen write in a judicial capacity. But so do all authors whose work is of sufficient weight and depth to have a formative effect on the public mind. For such an author to accept payment from a commercial enterprise for using his influence to induce the public to buy its wares would be to sin against the Holy Ghost.

To propose such a transaction to Mr. H. G. Wells is like offering the Archbishop of Canterbury a handsome cheque for dropping a recommendation of somebody's soap or shoes into his next sermon, or sounding the Astronomer Royal as to the possibility of keeping the clock back for half an hour during a big sale, or on polling day at an election. Its acceptance would be the last depravity of corruption in literature.

By all means let our commercial houses engage skilled but nameless scribes like Callisthenes to write their advertisements as such. But a writer who has been consecrated by Fame to the service of the public, and has thus become prophet as well as author, must take wages in no other service.

G. Wells wrote as follows to Harrods (March 1929): ²⁶

I'm afraid I cannot do what you ask because I have my mind quite full with other work, and even if that were not so, I think I should have to decline your offer.

I feel I must decline, but I find I have to rout about in my mind, to discover the hidden, almost instinctive reason for that refusal.

A writer, you say, is a skilled professional, an artist. Why should he not do what all artists, architects, technicians, and so forth do, and place his skill at your disposal?

The answer is that, rightly or wrongly, the writer takes himself more seriously than that. In his heart he classes himself not with the artists but with the teachers and the priests and prophets. That may be an old view, and it may be going out of fashion.

We all believe, of our generation, deep in our foundations, that our paymaster ought to be the reader. We live on sales to readers and we don't accept fees. There is, we feel, an implicit understanding between writer and reader to the effect: Publishers and newspapers may buy our work for considerable sums but that is merely a speculative anticipation of the reader's tribute.

Apart from that your project is most attractive. I can imagine nothing more amusing and exciting than to study your marvellous organisation closely and explain its working.

Some day I shall do something of the sort and come to you for particulars. But you will pay me nothing for that. I shall do it because it will interest me and because I think it will interest my readers. Facts you may give me with both hands, but not money.

I have already sketched the appearance of your type of business in *Clissold* and of something distantly akin in *Tono Bungay*. I have long thought of coming closer to facts and tracing the actual development of some great distributing firm.

Used by permission of Mr. H. G. Wells.

Typical of the great kindness and gentleness of character for which Walt Whitman was revered, is this note of declination written to his friend, Francis Howard Williams.

Camden
Wednesday Evng
Nov: 26¹⁸⁴⁴

Thanks, Dear friend,
but I am under a
Solemn Promise
elsewhere & must.
Keep it — But
we must surely have
an hour or two &
talk perhaps a meal
together soon —
— Affectionate respects
to Mrs. Williams.
Walt Whitman

*A letter of resignation is a letter of declination. When, in November 1936, Mr. John Boettiger resigned as assistant to Mr. Will Hays, head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, to become publisher of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, he wrote this gracious and graceful letter to "Dear General":*²⁷

The matters we discussed before you sailed and then talked about on the telephone while you were in Rome have fully materialized, and in a few days I shall be leaving for Seattle. I have cabled you this fact, but before I go I want to put down a few departing thoughts about the last two years.

To say that it has been a great pleasure to work with you is putting it mildly indeed. You have been boss and friend in the finest sense of both words. I appreciate to the fullest the added knowledge and experience I have acquired in this association with you, but far more do I value having made such a real friend.

I have had ample opportunity in these two years to see intimately and to study the problems and the opportunities of motion pictures. Even as I return to my first choice—the newspaper business—I think it is not amiss for me here to say to you that it is good to know that the leaders in the industry—and more and more the people outside it as well—know and appreciate your efforts and your leadership. Your sagacity and your honesty of purpose have brought the business through many perilous times and finally to the high place which it now occupies.

I know it will go forward as long as you are at the wheel, so more power to you, and may the strain of doing a difficult and strenuous job never get you down.

Anna joins me in sending love to you and Jessie. We shall get together whenever we can in the years to come.

This letter was written in reply to an application by an old friend to an old friend. It is not only a NO letter written in a live and constructive style, but an intimate recommendation as well.

I am sorry that I must tell you, in reply to your letter of May second, that it is impossible for me to avail myself of your services at present. Those services, I know, would be better than excellent, for I have watched your career, and I have seen you adorn everything that you have touched in the particular department of merchandising in which you now justifiably seek advancement.

Your ability and experience make you an invaluable man, and you should have no difficulty in getting the sort of job you desire and deserve. If in any way at all I can help you to do so, I of course want you to give me first opportunity to recommend you.

There's no use my saying here and now that "I shall keep your letter on file in case a vacancy unexpectedly occurs." You know perfectly

²⁷ Used by permission of Mr. John Boettiger.

well that you would be the first man I should turn to if I had even the shadow of a place for you.

I haven't, and I am sorry to say that I see little promise in the future here for you. But keep me informed about yourself.

The letter below was written by a large retail house to a wholesale firm. It says NO with a note of regret and perhaps with two notes of promise.

Your very kind offer has to be declined for the good and sufficient reason—as these things go—that we closed last week with Miner and Rayton for winter shipments.

But please keep after us. We shall be open again for bids about February first, and we shall do no buying then until we have made a thoroughgoing examination of the field. We tried to do so this time, but, as you know, we were caught by the strike and were consequently obliged to proceed short-handed and, to a degree, uninformed.

We liked your samples, and we liked your prices. We shall look forward to doing business with you one of these days.

DISSATISFACTION

In the literature of letters there is a category known as *grumble letters*—letters that are evoked by anger, failure, defeat, disappointment, melancholy, loneliness, and the like. It is generally assumed that such letters cannot possibly be interesting, cannot possibly evince aliveness or personality. But this assumption is wrong. An individual who has personal grievances to air is very likely to put his heart and soul into the airing. When the individual happens to be a person of acknowledged talent in literature, his epistolary grumbles may become not only interesting but engaging, and may reveal more force of character and personality than his other letters do. The letter of claim or complaint is the corresponding category in business letter writing.

The following letter of grumble and reproof was written by Pliny (62-110) on his being "stood up" by Septitius Clarus for a supper engagement. Its ring of modernity is noteworthy.

How happened it, my friend, that you did not keep your engagement the other night to sup with me? But take notice, justice is to be had, and I expect you shall fully reimburse me the expense I was at to treat you; which, let me tell you, was no small sum. I had prepared, you must know, a lettuce apiece, three snails, two eggs, and a barley cake, with some sweet wine and snow:²⁸ the snow

²⁸ Romans used snow to cool their wine, and also their stomachs after having inflamed themselves with "high dining."

most certainly I shall charge to your account, as a rarity that will not keep. Besides all these curious dishes, there were olives of Andalusia, gourds, shalots, and a hundred other dainties equally sumptuous. You should likewise have been entertained either with an interlude, the rehearsal of a poem, or a piece of music, as you liked best; or (such was my liberality) with all three. But the luxurious delicacies and Spanish dancer of a certain — I know not who, were, it seems, more to your taste. However, I shall have my revenge of you, depend upon it; in what manner shall at present be a secret. In good truth it was not kind, thus to mortify your friend. I had almost said yourself; and upon second thoughts I do say so; for how agreeably should we have spent the evening, in laughing, trifling, and deep speculation! But you can be treated nowhere, believe me, with more unconstrained cheerfulness, simplicity, and freedom: only make the experiment; and if you do not ever afterward prefer my table to any other, never favor me with your company again. Farewell.

The great Samuel Johnson was not deceived, as David Hume and numerous others were, when James Macpherson issued his famous "Ossian," claiming that it was a translation from ancient Gaelic poetry. Johnson contended from the first that the work was a forgery. Macpherson wrote him a threatening letter. Following is Johnson's terse, uncompromising, strongly individual reply to it:

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall not be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I still think it an imposture. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the publick, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable: and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

William Shenstone (1714-1763) was a recluse. He was a sadly disappointed man chiefly for the reason that money and fame had both eluded him in spite of his studied efforts to win one or both. This letter was written in 1741 to "A Friend."

Now I am come home from a visit—every little uneasiness is sufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy considerations, and to make me utterly dissatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life which I foresee I shall lead. I am angry, and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and disregard all present things, just as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleased (though it is a gloomy job) with the application of Dr. Swift's complaint, "that he is forced to die in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole." My soul is no more suited

to the figure I make than a cable rope to a cambric needle: I cannot bear to see the advantages alienated, which I think I could deserve and relish so much more than those that have them.—Nothing can give me patience but the soothing sympathy of a friend, and that will only turn my rage into simple melancholy.—I believe soon I shall bear to see nobody. I do hate all hereabouts already, except one or two. I will have my dinner brought upon my table in my absence, and the plates fetched away in my absence; and nobody shall see me: for I can never bear to appear in the same stupid mediocrity for years together, and gain no ground. As Mr. G— complained to me (and, I think, you too, both unjustly), “I am no character.”—I have in my temper some rakishness, but it is checked by want of spirits; some solidity, but it is softened by vanity; some esteem of learning, but it is broke in upon by laziness, imagination, and want of memory, etc.—I could reckon up twenty things throughout my whole circumstances wherein I am thus tantalized. Your fancy will present them.—Not that all I say here will signify to you: I am only under a fit of dissatisfaction, and to grumble does me good—only excuse me, that I cure myself at your expense. Adieu!

William Cowper unbosomed himself to his favorite cousin, Lady Hesketh, on October 13, 1798, in the following vein of dejection. Most of his many letters are gay and clever, and deserve to be read and studied by the student of epistolary composition. His latter years were lonely and would have been desolate had it not been for his loving to write letters to his friends no less than to receive them from his friends.

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he ever saw them, could receive no delight from them—who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the advantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any. In one day, in one moment I should rather have said, she became an *universal blank* to me, and, though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself. In this country if there are not mountains, there are hills; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this, I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me? It neighbours nearly, and as nearly resembles the scenery at Catfield; but with what different perceptions does it present me! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We

shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you yesterday, but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.

To his friend and inspiration, Lady Holland, the Reverend Sydney Smith registers a "gentle grumble" about the physical dissatisfactions of growing old. This letter was written on September 13, 1842, three years before his death. The dashes stand for names of mutual friends. Bobus was the nickname of Robert Percy Smith, Sydney's brother.

I am sorry to hear Allen is not well; but the reduction of his legs is a pure and unmixed good; they are enormous—they are clerical! He has the creed of a philosopher and the legs of a clergyman; I never saw such legs—at least, belonging to a layman.

Read *A Life in the Forest*, skipping nimbly; but there is much of good in it.

It is a bore, I admit, to be past seventy, for you are left for execution, and are daily expecting the death-warrant; but, as you say, it is not anything very capital we quit. We are, at the close of life, only hurried away from stomach-aches, pains in the joints, from sleepless nights and unamusing days, from weakness, ugliness, and nervous tremors; but we shall all meet again in another planet, cured of all our defects. — will be less irritable; — more silent; — will assent; Jeffrey will speak slower; Bobus will be just as he is; I shall be more respectful to the upper clergy; but I shall have as lively a sense as I now have of all your kindness and affection for me.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) wrote the following characteristic author-letter to a pressing publisher, Joseph Cottle, of Bristol, England. The date of the letter is February 22, 1796. Cottle published much for Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, and Coleridge, too frequently out of friendship rather than financial promise. As a schoolboy Coleridge had longed to become a shoemaker. His wife, formerly Sara Fricker, sister of Southey's wife Edith, had never been able to sympathize with her husband's intellectual pursuits. Coleridge had had, moreover, an early love affair with one Mary Evans, a Welsh girl, whom he was never really able to forget. (See Southey's letter to Cottle on page 91.)

It is my duty and business to thank God for all his dispensations, and to believe them the best possible; but, indeed, I think I should have been more thankful, if he had made me a journeyman shoemaker, instead of an author by trade. I have left my friends; I have left plenty; I have left that ease which would have secured a literary immortality, and have enabled me to give the public works conceived

in moments of inspiration, and polished them with leisurely solicitude; and, alas! for what have I left them? for — who deserted me in the hour of distress, and for a scheme of virtue impracticable and romantic! So I am forced to write for bread; write the flights of poetic enthusiasm, when every minute I am hearing a groan from my wife. Groans, and complaints, and sickness! The present hour I am in a quick-set hedge of embarrassment, and whichever way I turn a thorn runs into me! The future is cloud and thick darkness! Poverty, perhaps, and the thin faces of them that want bread, looking up to me! Nor is this all. My happiest moments for composition are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste. I am too late! I am already months behind! I have received my pay beforehand! Oh, wayward and desultory spirit of genius! Ill canst thou brook a taskmaster! The tenderest touch from the hand of obligation wounds thee like a scourge of scorpions.

I have been composing in the fields this morning, and came home to write down the first rude sheet of my preface, when I heard that your man had brought a note from you. I have not seen it, but I guess its contents. I am writing as fast as I can. Depend on it you shall not be out of pocket for me! I feel what I owe you, and independently of this I love you as a friend; indeed, so much, that I regret, seriously regret, that you have been my copyholder.

If I have written petulantly, forgive me. God knows I am sore all over. God bless you, and believe me that, setting gratitude aside, I love and esteem you, and have your interest at heart full as much as my own.

Frederick Marryat (1792-1848) on September 6, 1840, wrote the following letter to Lady Blessington of whom he was a special favorite. Marryat served in the British Navy and was generally known as Captain Marryat. His two principal sea stories are "Peter Simple" and "Mr. Midshipman Easy." His epistolary style carries over from his vivid and breezy sea stories.

In reply to your kind inquiries, allow me first to observe that I have two most *splendid grumbles* on my list, so splendid that I hardly know how to part with them. *Now for grumble the first.* When Sir James Graham was at the Admiralty he was pleased to consider that my professional services entitled me to some mark of His Majesty's approbation, and accordingly asked His Majesty to give me the star of the Guelph and knighthood. To this request His Majesty King William was pleased to reply, in his usual frank, off-handed way, "Oh, yes—Marryat, I know—bring him here on Thursday" (the day of application having been Monday). But, it appears that while my "greatness was ripening," some kind friend informed His Majesty that I had once written a pamphlet on impressment. And when Sir James saw His Majesty on the Wednesday, the King said to him, "By the bye, Marryat wrote a work on impressment, I hear" (whether for or against, His Majesty did not deign to inquire). "I won't give him anything"; adding, in his wonted free and easy style, "I'll see him d—d first!" Now the request

of a Cabinet Minister is supposed to confirm the claim, and it is not usual for the Sovereign to refuse; indeed His Majesty seemed to be aware of that, for he said "The *Guelph* is *my own* order, and I will not give it unless I choose." Sir James Graham of course did not press the matter after His Majesty's opinion so frankly expressed. And there the matter dropped—so that, instead of the honour intended, I had the honour of being d——d by a sovereign, and have worn my traveling name ever since. You'll allow that that is a *capital grumble*. Now for grumble *No. two*.

Twenty-six years ago, soon after the peace, I was requested by Lloyds and the ship-owners to write a code of signals for the merchant service. I did so, and in the various annual reports of these societies they have stated that the saving of lives and property by the means of these signals has been enormous. They were, at the request of Lloyds, supplied to the British men-of-war, to enable merchant vessels to communicate their wants, etc., and eventually they have been used in all the English colonies and dependencies by the government, to communicate with vessels, and along the coast. The French, perceiving their advantage, had them translated and supplied to their men-of-war and merchantmen. Now, independent of the value they may be to the country, in saving lives and property, and the claim which I have on that account, I have one also in a pecuniary way, for during the *twenty-six years* that they have been established they have also been supplied *gratis* to the British Navy—and if it is considered how many vessels we have had in commission, had this been paid for, it would have amounted to a very large sum.

For this service I have never received remuneration whatever from our own government. When I was at Paris, some years ago, Admiral de Rigny, the French First Lord sent for me, and without any application on my part, informed me that, in consequence of the important advantage derived by the use of my signals, the King of the French had been pleased to give me the *Gold Cross* of the Legion of Honour (equivalent to the C.B. in England); so that I have been rewarded by a nation for whom the signals were not written, and from my own government have received nothing—I beg pardon, I did receive something, a letter from Lord Palmerston, *forbidding* me to wear the distinction granted to me by the King of the French. Now I call that also a *capital grumble*.

I have asked Sir Robert Peel to give me employment, and I did so because I consider that I have done some service to the Conservative cause—at all events, I have worked hard, and suffered much in purse. The contest of the Tower Hamlets cost me between *six and seven thousand pounds*, which is a serious *chance* to a man with seven children, all with very large ideas, and very small fortunes; and I have felt the loss ever since. I have invariably laboured very hard in the cause, never neglecting to infuse Conservative ideas in all my writings. I have written much in the newspapers, and never yet sent any article to the *Times*, which was not immediately inserted. One Conservative paper, which was dying a natural death, the *Era*, weekly paper, I re-established, and it now circulates upwards of five thou-

sand; I did this out of good-will to the proprietor and zeal for the cause, for I never received a sixpence for many months' labour. The *Era* is the Licensed Victuallers' paper, and I argued that wherever that paper was taken in, the *Weekly Dispatch* would not be; and that where the man who draws the beer is a Conservative, those who drink it will become the same. It is well known that it was chiefly through the exertions of the Licensed Victuallers that Captain Rous was returned for Westminster.

As to my professional services, it is to the Admiralty that I must look for remuneration, and as for my literary reputation, it is an affair between me and the public; but I think you must acknowledge that I have claims for *omission* and claims for *commission*, and when I see the Whigs giving away Baronetcies to Easthope, etc., for literary services, and Clay, my opponent at the Tower Hamlets, for contesting elections; I do feel that the party which I have supported, now that I have decided claims upon the country, should not throw me away like a sucked orange; if they do, why—virtue must be its own reward. It will be all the same a hundred years hence.

I have now let it all out, and I feel a great deal better.

Robert Louis Stevenson was dissatisfied with his impaired and inefficient body, and thought he would like to make a trade with his robust friend, Cosmo Monkhouse. This "gentle grumble" was written on April 24, 1884, at La Solitude, Hyères, and Stevenson, taking the acceptance of his terms for granted, signed it with the Monkhouse name!²⁹ (See page 362.)

If you are in love with repose, here is your occasion: change with me. I am too blind to read, hence no reading; I am too weak to walk, hence no walking; I am not allowed to speak, hence no talking; but the great simplification has yet to be named, for if this goes on, I shall soon have nothing to eat—and hence, O Hallelujah! hence no eating. The offer is a fair one: I have not sold myself to the devil for I could never find him. I am married, but so are you. I sometimes write verses, but so do you! Come! *Illic quies!*³⁰ As for the commandments, I have broken them so small that they are the dust of my chambers; you walk upon them, triturate and toothless; and with the Golosh of Philosophy, they shall not bite your heel. True, the tenement is falling. Ay, friend, but yours also. Take a larger view; what is a year or two? dust in the balance! 'Tis done, behold you Cosmo Stevenson, and me R. L. Monkhouse; you at Hyères, I in London; you rejoicing in the clammiest repose, me proceeding to tear your tabernacle into rags, as I have already so admirably torn my own.

My place to which I now introduce you—it is yours—is like a London house, high and very narrow; upon the lungs I will not linger; the heart is large enough for a ballroom; the belly greedy and inefficient;

²⁹ Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

³⁰ Here you rest.

the brain stocked with the most damnable explosives, like a dynamiter's den. The whole place is well furnished, though not in a very pure taste; Corinthian much of it; showy and not strong.

About your place I shall try to find my way alone, an interesting exploration. Imagine me, as I go to bed, falling over a blood-stained remorse; opening that cupboard in the cerebellum and being welcomed by the spirit of your murdered uncle. I should probably not like your remorse; I wonder if you will like mine; I have a spirited assortment; they whistle in my ear o' nights like a northeaster. I trust yours don't dine with the family; mine are better mannered; you will hear nought of them till 2 a.m., except one, to be sure, that I have made a pet of, but he is small; I keep him in buttons, so as to avoid commentaries: you will like him much—if you like what is genuine.

Must we likewise change religions? Mine is a good article, with a trick of stopping; cathedral bell note; ornamental dial; supported by Venus and the Graces; quite a summer-parlour piety. Of yours, since your last, I fear there is little to be said.

There is one article I wish to take away with me: my spirits. They suit me. I don't want yours; I like my own; I have had them a long while in bottle. It is my only reservation.—Yours (as you decide),

*The letters of Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) are remarkable for their vigor and piquancy. Any letter writer—business or friendly—will gather both pleasure and benefit from reading them. One Monday morning he found the following note in his mail:*³¹

I journeyed from my New York hotel yesterday morning to hear you preach, expecting, of course, to hear an exposition of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, I heard a political harangue with no reason or cohesion in it. You made an ass of yourself.

Beecher replied on the instant, using the back of the sheet on which his "dissatisfied customer" had complained.

I am sorry you should have taken so long a journey to hear Christ preached, and then heard what you are polite enough to call a "political harangue." I am sorry, too, that you think I made an ass of myself. In this connection I have but one consolation: that you didn't make an ass of *yourself*. The Lord did that.

It took Mark Twain to make a claim, a complaint, a grumble altogether engaging and even enticing. The wonder is that people didn't deliberately displease him in the hope of provoking an inimitable letter from him. The first one below he wrote to the

³¹ Used by permission of Mrs. Edward Bok.

*Hartford (Connecticut) Gas and Electric Lighting Company; the second, to the president of the Western Union Telegraph Company of New York.*³²

1

There are but two places in our whole street where lights could be of any value, by any accident, and you have measured and appointed your intervals so ingeniously as to leave each of those places in the centre of a couple of hundred yards of solid darkness. When I noticed that you were setting one of your lights in such a way that I could almost see how to get into my gate at night, I suspected that it was a piece of carelessness on the part of the workmen, and would be corrected as soon as you should go around inspecting and find it out. My judgment was right; it is always right, when you are concerned. For fifteen years, in spite of my prayers and tears, you persistently kept a gas lamp exactly half way between my gates, so that I couldn't find either of them after dark; and then furnished such execrable gas that I had to hang a danger signal on the lamp post to keep teams from running into it, nights. Now I suppose your present idea is, to leave us a little more in the dark.

Don't mind us—out our way; we possess but one vote apiece, and no rights which you are in any way bound to respect. Please take your electric light and go to—but never mind, it is not for me to suggest; you will probably find the way; and any way you can reasonably count on divine assistance if you lose your bearings.

2

I desire to make a complaint, and I bring it to you, the head of the company, because by experience I know better than to carry it to a subordinate.

I have been here a month and a half, and by testimony of friends, reinforced by personal experience, I now feel qualified to claim as an established fact that the telegraphic service here is the worst in the world except that [of] Boston.

These services are actually slower than was the New York and Hartford service in the days when I last complained to you—which was fifteen or eighteen years ago, when telegraphic time and train time between the mentioned points were exactly the same, to-wit, three hours and a half.

Six days ago—it was that raw day which provoked so much comment—my daughter was on her way up from New York, and at noon she telegraphed me from New Haven asking that I meet her with a cloak at Portsmouth. Her telegram reached me four hours and a quarter later—just 15 minutes too late for me to catch my train and meet her.

I judge that the telegram traveled about 200 miles. It is the best telegraphic work I have seen since I have been here, and I am men-

³² Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

tioning it in this place not as a complaint but as a compliment. I think a compliment ought always to precede a complaint, where one is possible, because it softens resentment and insures for the complaint a courteous and gentle reception.

Still, there is a detail or two connected with this matter which ought perhaps to be mentioned. And now, having smoothed the way with the compliment, I will venture them. The head corpse in the York Harbor office sent me that telegram altho (1) he knew it would reach me too late to be of any value; (2) also, that he was going to send it to me by his boy; (3) that the boy would not take the trolley and come the 2 miles in 12 minutes, but would walk; (4) that he would be two hours and a quarter on the road; (5) and that he would collect 25 cents for transportation, for a telegram which the h. c. knew to be worthless before he started it. From these data I infer that the Western Union owes me 75 cents; that is to say, the amount paid for combined wire and land transportation—a recoup provided for in the printed paragraph which heads the telegraph-blank.

By these humane and Christian stages we now arrive at the complaint proper. We have had a grave case of illness in the family, and a relative was coming some six hundred miles to help in the sick-room during the convalescing period. It was an anxious time, of course, and I wrote and asked to be notified as to the hour of the expected arrival of this relative in Boston or in York Harbor. Being afraid of the telegraph—which I think ought not to be used in times of hurry and emergency—I asked that the desired message be brought to me by some swift method of transportation. By the milkman, if he was coming this way. But there are always people who think they know more than you do, especially young people; so of course the young fellow in charge of this lady used the telegraph. And at Boston, of all places! Except York Harbor.

The result was as usual, let me employ a statelier and exacter term, and say, historical.

The dispatch was handed to the h. c. of the Boston office at 9 this morning. It said, "Shall bring A. S. to you eleven forty-five this morning." The distance traveled by the dispatch is forty or fifty miles, I suppose, as the train-time is five minutes short of two hours, and the trains are so slow that they can't give a W. U. telegram two hours and twenty minutes start and overtake it.

As I have said, the dispatch was handed in at Boston at 9. The expected visitors left Boston at 9.40, and reached my house at 12 noon, beating the telegram 2 solid hours, and 5 minutes over.

The boy brought the telegram. It was bald-headed with age, but still legible. The boy was prostrate with travel and exposure, but still alive, and I went out to condole with him and get his last wishes and send for the ambulance. He was waiting to collect transportation before turning his passing spirit to less serious affairs. I found him strangely intelligent, considering his condition and where he is

getting his training. I asked him at what hour the telegram was handed to the h. c. in Boston. He answered brightly, that he didn't know.

I examined the blank, and sure enough the wary Boston h. c. had thoughtfully concealed that statistic. I asked him at what hour it had started from Boston. He answered up as brightly as ever, and said he didn't know.

I examined the blank, and sure enough the Boston h. c. had left that statistic out in the cold, too. In fact it turned out to be an official concealment—no blank was provided for its exposure. And none required by the law, I suppose. "It is a good one-sided idea," I remarked: "they can take your money and ship your telegram next year if they want to—you've no redress. The law ought to extend the privilege to all of us."

The boy looked upon me coldly.

I asked him when the telegram reached York Harbor. He pointed to some figures following the signature at the bottom of the blank—"12.14." I said it was now 1.45 and asked—

"Do you mean that it reached your morgue an hour and a half ago?" He nodded assent.

"It was at that time half an hour too late to be of any use to me, if I wanted to go and meet my people—which was the case—for by the wording of the message you can see that they were to arrive at the station at 11.45. Why did your h. c. send me this useless message? Can't he read? Is he dead?"

"It's the rules."

"No, that does not account for it. Would he have sent it if it had been three years old, I in the meantime deceased, and he aware of it?" The boy didn't know.

"Because, you know, a rule which required him to forward to the cemetery today a dispatch due three years ago, would be as good a rule as one which should require him to forward a telegram to me today which he knew had lost all its value an hour or two before he started it. The construction of such a rule would discredit an idiot; in fact an idiot—I mean a common ordinary Christian idiot, you understand—would be ashamed of it, and for the sake of his reputation wouldn't make it. What do you think?"

He replied with much natural brilliancy that he wasn't paid for thinking.

This gave me a better opinion of the commercial intelligence pervading his morgue than I had had before; it also softened my feelings toward him, and also my tone, which had hitherto been tinged with bitterness.

"Let bygones be bygones," I said, gently, "we are all erring creatures, and mainly idiots, but God made us so and it is dangerous to criticise."

This note written by John Galsworthy to Edmund Gosse, British poet, essayist, and critic, gracefully combines the friendly with the business tone. Galsworthy was at the time in the United States—"the land of hurry"—supervising the production of his play "The Pigeon."³³

Edmund Gosse

March 9, 1912

I write from the land of hurry to
thank you for your kind letter, and still
kinder, through for me. I have heard too
from the Secretary, I shall wire him my
acceptance.

With all good wishes

Yours respectfully

John Galsworthy

John Galsworthy (1867-1933) in the following letter³⁴ mixed congratulation and grumble in very disproportionate parts. It was written on August 28, 1911, to his British publishers. In the long second paragraph he probably touched a chord in common with all other authors in the world, whether justifiably or not. The letter revives the age-old question, "Are publishers and authors ever completely satisfied with one another?"

³³ Used by permission of Mrs. Galsworthy.

³⁴ Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

I hope you will congratulate your artist from me on the cover of *The Country House*. I think it is very good indeed.

I dare say you are disappointed with the sales of *The Patrician*, and I am also. I cannot believe that something could not be done to put renewed life into them. There does not seem to be any advance to speak of on *Fraternity*, although the book was admittedly more likely to be popular. I can't understand it. I wonder whether your travelers take trouble about my books. I never see them on railway bookstalls anywhere, and hardly ever in a shop window. I feel that I am the sort of author about whom a publisher soon says: "Oh, yes—Galsworthy—superior sort of stuff—will only reach a certain circulation," and then gives it up. But I don't accept that view of my own writing; it has this distinction (among many others) from the work, say, of James, Meredith, or Conrad—that it is absolutely clear in style, and not in the least exotic, and can be read by the average person without straining the intellect. I feel that from *The Man of Property* 5000, to *The Patrician* 8000, is a very discouraging rise. Of course I know you will say you can't make the public buy my books, but that is just the point. I think you could make them more than you have. I seem to feel that both you and Heinemann have become perhaps discouraged, perhaps a little indifferent. If that is the case, I had better know.

The four letters below constitute an "exchange of civility" that would be worthy of the most disgruntled customer of the most unaccommodating shop."

1

Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckburgh, and would be obliged to her for the character of Mary Steadman, who states that she has lived twelve months and still is, in Lady Shuckburgh's establishment. Can Marv Steadman cook plain dishes well, and make bread, and is she honest, sober, willing, cleanly, and good tempered? Lady Seymour will also like to know the reason she leaves Lady Shuckburgh's house. Direct under care to Lord Seymour, Meriden Bradley, Wiltshire.

2

Lady Shuckburgh presents her compliments to Lady Seymour; her ladyship's letter, dated October 28, reached her only yesterday, November 3. Lady Shuckburgh was unacquainted with the name of the kitchenmaid until mentioned by Lady Seymour, as it is her custom neither to apply for, nor give, characters to any of the under servants, this being always done by the housekeeper, Mrs. Couch, and this was well known to the young woman. Therefore Lady Shuckburgh is surprised at her referring any lady to her for a character. Lady Shuckburgh, keeping a professed cook, as well as a housekeeper, in her establishment, it is not very probable she herself should know anything of the abilities or merits of the under servants; she is therefore unable to reply to Lady Seymour's note. Lady Shuckburgh cannot imagine Mary Steadman to be capable of cooking anything, except for the servants' hall table.

3

Lady Seymour presents her compliments to Lady Shuckburgh, and begs she will order her housekeeper, Mrs. Couch, to send the girl's character, otherwise another young woman will be sought for elsewhere, as Lady Seymour's children cannot remain without their diners because Lady Shuckburgh, keeping a professed cook and housekeeper, thinks a knowledge of the details of her establishment beneath her notice. Lady Seymour understands from Steadman that, in addition to her other talents, she was actually capable of cooking food for the little Shuckburghs to partake of when hungry.

4

MADAM—Lady Shuckburgh has directed me to acquaint you that she declines answering your note, the vulgarity of which she thinks beneath her contempt, and although it may be characteristic of the Sheridans to be vulgar, coarse, and witty, it is not that of a lady, unless she chances to have been *born in a garret and bred in a kitchen*. Mary Steadman informs me that your ladyship does not keep either a cook or a housekeeper, and that you only require a girl who can cook a mutton chop; if so, I apprehend that Mary Steadman, or any *other scullion*, will be found fully equal to the establishment of the Queen of Beauty.—I am, your Ladyship's etc., etc.

ELIZABETH COUCH

The two letters below are alive in the wrong sense for successful and progressive business relationship.

What's the matter with you people? Can't you fill a small order, such as ours of June 1, and get the goods to us when we want them? If you can't, say so, and we'll deal with people that deliver.

We purchase, we pay, and we "come again," provided we get what we want, as we want it, when we want it, where we want it.

If you're game for this policy, why, come play with us. If you're not, say the word, and we'll chuck you for "them as is."

And, anyway, if it's not asking too much of you,

FILL THAT ORDER OF June 1.
... Yes? ? ?

Then maybe we'll say "Thank you."

Tut! Tut!

Let not your angry passions rise.

Sorry isn't the word for our frame of mind. We're prone in the dust, crushed to earth, wrapped in sackcloth, and all the rest of it.

But just as soon as you get a minute read with your very own eyes the enclosed copy of receipt from your house, showing that goods referred to in your COURTESY of June 1 were received by your incoming department on June 5.

So again—Tut! Tut!—And Fudge! Fudge!

Doesn't it beat all how we sometimes get our own wires crossed!

However . . .

P.S. Now mebbe you'll say Thank You—and then again—mebbe you won't.

'The two foregoing letters are here toned down. They are still alive, however, but not "alive AND KICKING."

The goods that I ordered of you on June 1 have not been received, and I am being caused some inconvenience as a result.

It seems to me that you must have had ample time to fill the order and get the shipment to me. Will you please look into it at once, and save me not only further annoyance, but possibly money also? I shall be greatly obliged to you

If you have forwarded the goods, and they have perhaps been delayed or damaged in transit, you will save the situation for me by an immediate substitute shipment, for which you may make any reasonable adjustment in my account.

Thank you for your letter of June 10. We are sorry that you have been caused annoyance and inconvenience in connection with your order of June 1.

We have gone over our records very carefully, and we find that your goods were sent on June 2 and received by your incoming department on June 5. We enclose copy of receipt from your Mr. Ferguson. So the whole trouble seems to be due to one of those unaccountable mistakes that insist upon happening from time to time to the best of us.

Again, let us say that we regret extremely that you have been disturbed regarding this. We hope that you have traced the goods by this time.

We also hope that our agreeable relations with you may be continued as pleasantly in the future as they have been in the past.

This is another writing of the foregoing adjustment:

We are very sorry indeed that you have been caused inconvenience regarding your order of June 1

Thoro examination of the transaction has been made at this end. We find that your shipment left this office on June 2, and that a receipt from your incoming department was filed with us on June 5. This indicates that the goods have been received by some one at your place of business. The initials on the receipt are RLT.

May it be that the delivery has not been brought to your attention, or that the goods may have been misplaced or overlooked in the rush of work?

Please wire at our expense if you have not located them yet. We shall then see that a substitute order is immediately forwarded, in compliance with your direction.

Again, let us say that we are extremely sorry. Please make any demands upon us to have this situation immediately set aright, and they shall be met.

GRATITUDE

There are many ways of saying *Thank you*. To be able to accept gracefully and to express gratitude graciously are accomplishments that come with education and culture—with that indefinable something popularly known as background. It has been said that anybody who has the wherewithal can give, but very few know how to receive. Perhaps this is one reason why it is more blessed to give than to receive. Here are a few letters that say *Thank you* with grace and charm and sincerity.

While Ben Jonson (1573-1637) could pen a forceful begging letter (see page 105) he could be equally sincere and impressive in a letter of gratitude, as witness this note to his friend and patron, the Earl of Newcastle. The gratuity referred to was probably for the play "Love's Welcome at Welbeck" performed at the Duke of Newcastle's estate when King Charles was entertained there in 1533.

My Noble Lord and my best Patron,

I have done the business your Lordship trusted me with; and the morning after I received by my beloved friend, Master Payne, your Lordship's timely gratuity—I style it such, for it fell like the dew of heaven on my necessities—I pray to God my work may have deserved it. I meant it should in the working it, and I have hope the performance will conclude it. In the meantime I tell your Lordship what I seriously think—God sends you these chargeable and magnificent honours of making feasts, to mix with your charitable succours, dropt upon me your servant; who have nothing to claim of merit but a cheerful undertaking, whatsoever your Lordship's judgment thinks me able to perform. I am in the number of your humblest servants, my Lord, and the most willing, and do joy in the good friendship and fellowship of my learned friend, Master Payne, than whom your Lordship could not have employed a more diligent and judicious man, or that hath treated me with more humanity; which makes me cheerfully to insert myself into your Lordship's commands, and so sure a clientèle.

Wholly and only your Lordships

BEN JONSON

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) has his little joke with his friend and benefactress, Miss Houdley (later Mrs. Boyle), daughter of his famous archbishop. In most of his letters of this period—this one is dated June 4, 1734—the Dean evinced a note of longing for England. He was never completely happy in Ireland which he called a "curst, factious, oppressed, miserable country; not made so by nature but by the slavish, bellicious principles

of an execrable prevailing faction of it." Archbishop Hoadley had made the tenants of the See lands better farmers, and he had also erected a palace for the See at Tallaght, both largely as result of Swift's insistence. Swift was therefore able to overlook the archbishop's eccentricities, to tolerate his politics, and to live on friendly terms with his family.

When I lived in England, once every year I issued out an edict, commanding that all ladies of wit, sense, merit, and quality, who had an ambition to be acquainted with me, should make the first advances at their peril; which edict, you may believe, was universally obeyed. When (much against my will) I came to live in this kingdom, I published the same edict; only, the harvest here being not altogether so plentiful, I confined myself to a smaller compass. This made me often wonder how you came so long to neglect your duty; for, if you pretend ignorance, I may produce legal witnesses against you.

I have heard of a judge bribed with a pig, but it was discovered by the squealing; and, therefore, you have been so politic as to send me a dead one, which can tell no tales. Your present of butter was made with the same design, as a known court practice, to grease my fist that I might keep silence. These are great offences, contrived on purpose to corrupt my integrity. And, besides, I apprehend, that if I should wait on you to return my thanks, you will deny that the pig and butter were any advances at all on your side, and give out that I made them first: by which I may endanger the fundamental privilege, that I have kept so many years in the kingdom, at least make it a point of controversy. However, I have two ways to be revenged: first, I will let all the ladies of my acquaintance know, that you, the sole daughter and child of his Grace of Dublin, one so mean as to descend to understand housewifery; which every girl of this town, who can afford sixpence a month for a chair, would scorn to be thought to have the least knowledge in; and this will give you as ill a reputation as if you had been caught in the act of reading a history, or handling a needle, or working in a field at Tallagh. My other revenge shall be this: when my lord's gentleman delivered his message, after I put him some questions, he drew out a paper containing your directions, and in your hand; I said it properly belonged to me; and, when I had read it, I put it in my pocket, and am ready to swear, when lawfully called, that it is written in a fair hand, rightly spelt, and good plain sense. You now may see I have you at mercy; for, upon the least offence given, I will show the paper to every female scrawler I meet, who will soon spread about the town that your writing and spelling are ungenteel and unfashionable, more like a parson than a lady.

I suppose, by this time, you are willing to submit; and, therefore, I desire you may stint me to two china bowls of butter a-week; for my breakfast is that of a sickly man, rice gruel, and I am wholly a stranger to tea and coffee, the companions of bread and butter. I received my third bowl last night, and I think my second is almost entire. I hope and believe my lord archbishop will teach his neighbouring tenants and farmers a little English country management; and I lay it upon you, madam, to bring housewifery in fashion among our ladies; that, by your example, they may no longer pride themselves on their natural

or affected ignorance. I am, with the truest respect and esteem, Madam, your most obdient and obliged,

P.S. I desire to present my most etc., to his grace and the ladies.

A hospitality or bread-and-butter letter "in reverse" is beautifully illustrated by the following written by Horace Walpole (1717-1797) to Lady Howe. The date is November 10, 1754. Walpole's letters should be studied by all who are ambitious to become good letter writers. His fine sense of humor, as here illustrated, and his intimate and flowing style make his letters literary masterpieces.

Soh! Madam, you expect to be thanked, because you have done a very obliging thing! But I won't thank you, and I won't be obliged. It is very hard one can't come into your house and commend anything, but you must recollect it and send it after one! I will never dine in your house again; and, when I do, I will like nothing; and, when I do, I will commend nothing; and, when I do, you shan't remember it. You are very grateful indeed to Providence that gave you so good a memory, to stuff it with nothing but bills of fare of what everybody likes to eat and drink! I wonder you are not ashamed—I wonder you are not ashamed! Do you think there is no such thing as gluttony of the memory?—You a Christian! A pretty account you will be able to give of yourself! Your fine folks in France may call this friendship and attention, perhaps, but sure, if I was to go to the devil, it should be for thinking of nothing but myself, not of others, from morning to night. I would send back your temptations, but, as I will not be obliged to you for them, verily I shall retain them to punish you, ingratitude being a proper chastisement for sinful friendliness. Thine in spirit,

Robert Southey (1774-1843) wrote this letter of gratitude to his friend, Joseph Cottle, the famous publisher of Bristol, England. It is companionpiece with the Scott letter (page 27) in its revelation of author-publisher relationship. In 1798 Cottle had published the "Lyrical Ballads" of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but he lost money on this publication as on so many others. It is partly because Southey was deeply conscious of these losses that he wrote so feelingly in this letter on August 28, 1808. Southey stands unexcelled in ability to combine the friendly with the business tone easily, simply, and coherently in a letter. (See the Coleridge letter on page 77.)

What you say of my copyrights affects me very much. Dear Cottle, set your heart at rest on that subject. It ought to be at rest. They were yours; fairly bought, and fairly sold. You bought them on the chance of their success, what no London bookseller would have done; and had they not been bought, they could not have been published at all. Nay, if you had not published *Joan of Arc*, the poem never

would have existed, nor should I, in all probability, ever have obtained that reputation which is the capital on which I subsist, nor that power which enables me to support it.

But this is not all. Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding ring, and paid my marriage fees, was supplied by you. It was with your sisters that I left my Edith during my six-months' absence; and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of our cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I *would entreat you preserve this, that it might be seen hereafter*. Sure I am, that there never was a more generous, nor a kinder heart than yours, and you will believe me when I add, that there does not live that man upon earth, whom I remember with more gratitude and more affection. My heart throbs, and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good-night, my dear old friend and benefactor.

Charles Lamb was greater, if possible, as a letter writer than as an essayist, tho his essays have probably been more widely read than his letters. The following comes under the general heading of bread-and-butter letters, but its contents indicate that Lamb partook less of the staff of life at Dr. and Mrs. J. Vale Asbury's party than of liquid nourishment, and this in spite of the fact that Dr. Asbury was THE Enfield doctor. The delightful garburity and irresponsible incoherence reflect truly the condition sometimes referred to as illumination or artificial animation. The letter was written in April 1830. Lieutenant John Barker, R. N., Mr. Lucas tells us, was a coal merchant and a local character. He had thirteen children, most of whom had such ambitious names as Concordia, Coriolanus, Marius.

It is an observation of a very wise man that "moderation is best in all things." I cannot agree with him "in liquor." There is a smoothness and oiliness in wine that makes it go down by a natural channel, which I am positive was made for that descending. Else, why does not wine choke us? Could Nature have made that sloping lane, not to facilitate the downgoing? She does nothing in vain. You know that better than I. You know how often she has helped you at a dead lift, and how much better entitled she is to a fee than yourself sometimes, when you carry off the credit. Still there is something due to manners and customs, and I should apologise to you and Mrs. Asbury for being absolutely carried home upon a man's shoulders thro' Silver Street, up Parson's Lane, by the Chapels (which might have taught me better), and then to be deposited like a dead log at Gaffar Westwood's, who it seems does not "insure" against intoxication. Not that the mode of conveyance is objectionable. On

the contrary, it is more easy than a one-horse chaise. Ariel in the *Tempest* says

"On a Bat's back do I fly, after sunset merrily."

Now I take it that Ariel must sometimes have stayed out late of nights. Indeed, he pretends that "where the bee sucks, there lurks he," as much as to say that his suction is as innocent as that little innocent (but damnably stinging when he is provok'd) winged creature. But I take it, that Ariel was fond of metheglin, of which the Bees are notorious Brewers. But then you will say: What a shocking sight to see a middle-aged gentleman-and-a-half riding upon a Gentleman's back up Parson's Lane at midnight! Exactly the time for that sort of conveyance, when nobody can see him, nobody but Heaven and his own conscience: now Heaven makes fools, and don't expect much from her own creation, and as for conscience, She and I have long since come to a compromise. I have given up false modesty, and she allows me to abate a little of the true. I like to be liked, but I don't care about being respected. I don't respect myself. But, as I was saying, I thought he would have let me down just as we got to Lieutenant Barker's Coal-shed (or emporium), but by a cunning jerk I eased myself, and righted my posture. I protest, I thought myself in a palanquin, and never felt myself so grandly carried. It was a slave under me. There was I, all but my reason. And what is reason? and what is the loss of it? and how often in a day do we do without it, just as well? Reason is only counting, two and two makes four. And if on my passage home, I thought it made five, what matter? Two and two will just make four, as it always did, before I took the finishing glass that did my business. My sister has begged me to write an apology to Mrs. A. and you for disgracing your party; now it does seem to me, that I rather honoured your party, for every one that was not drunk (and one or two of the ladies, I am sure, were not) must have been set off greatly in the contrast to me. I was the scapegoat. The soberer they seemed. By the way, is magnesia good on these occasions?—*iii pol med sum: ante noct: in rub: can.*—I am no licentiate, but know enough of simples to beg you to send me a draught after this model. But still you will say (or the men and maids at your house will say) that it is not a seemly sight for an old gentleman to go home pick-a-back. Well, may be it is not. But I never studied grace. I take it to be a mere superficial accomplishment. I regard more the internal acquisitions. The great object after supper is to get home, and whether that is obtained in a horizontal posture or perpendicular (as foolish men and apes affect for dignity), I think is little to the purpose. The end is always greater than the means. Here I am, able to compose a sensible rational apology, and what signifies how I got here? I have just sense enough to remember I was very happy last night, and to thank our kind host and hostess, and that's sense enough, I hope.

N.B.—What is good for a desperate headache? Whv, patience, and a determination not to mind being miserable all day long. And that I have made my mind up to. So, here goes. It is better than not being alive at all, which I might have been, had your man toppled me down at Lieut. Barker's Coal-shed. My sister sends her sober compliments to Mrs. A. She is not much the worse.

After the publication of Charles Lamb's "A Dissertation on Roast Pig" in The London Magazine, September 1822, he received many gifts of pig, and he wrote many letters of thanks to his friends and of appreciation of pig in general. The first below was written to John Childs; the second to Thomas Robinson.

1

In great haste, the Pig was faultless—we got decently merry after it and chirpt and sang "Heigh! Bessy Bungay!" in honor of the sender. Pray let me have a line to say you got the Books; keep the first volume two or three months, so long as it comes home at last.

2

We have to thank you or Mrs. Robinson—for I think her name was on the direction—for the best pig, which myself, the warmest of pig lovers, ever tasted. The dressing and the sauce were pronounced incomparable by two friends, who had the good fortune to drop in to dinner yesterday, but I must not mix up my cook's praises with my acknowledgments; let me but have leave to say that she and we did your pig justice. I should dilate on the crackling—done to a turn—but I am afraid Mrs. Clarkson, who, I hear, is with you, will set me down as an Epicure. Let it suffice that you have spoiled my appetite for boiled mutton for some time to come. Your brother Henry partook of the cold relics—by which he might have a good guess at what it had been *hot*.

With our thanks, pray convey our kind respects to Mrs. Robinson and the Lady before mentioned.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) was once called, by a wag of a critic, the "gushingest of letter writers." But of the hundreds of her letters collected and edited by Edward G. Kenyon there is not one that is not entertaining and interesting, and illustrative of the best possible letter tone and quality. The following note of thanks was written on June 18, 1844, to her friend, Hugh Stuart Boyd, the blind scholar whom she commemorated in her poem "Wine of Cyprus." She likewise addressed three sonnets to him.

Thank you, my very dear friend! I write to you drunk with Cyprus. Nothing can be worthier of either gods or demigods; and if, as you say, Achilles did not drink of it, I am sorry for him. I suppose Jupiter had it instead, just then—Hebe pouring it, and Juno's ox-eyes bellowing their splendour at it, if you will forgive me that broken metaphor, for the sake of Æschylus' genius, and my own particular intoxication.

Indeed, there *never was*, in modern days, such wine. Flush, to whom I offered the last drop in my glass, felt it was supernatural, and ran away. I have an idea that if he had drunk that drop, he would have talked afterwards—either Greek or English.

Never was such wine! The very taste of ideal nectar, only stiller, from keeping. If the bubbles of eternity were on it, *we* should run away, perhaps, like Flush.

Still, the thought comes to me, ought I to take it from you? Is it right of me? Are you not too kind in sending it? Should you be allowed to be too kind? In any case, you must not think of sending me more than you have already sent. It is more than enough, and I am not less than very much obliged to you.

I have passed the middle of my second volume, and I only hope that critics may say of the rest that it smells of Greek wine. Dearest Mr. Boyd's

Ever affectionate,

William Makepeace Thackeray in characteristic vein wrote the following note of thanks (with drawings) to a friend who had presented him with two geese for Christmas dinner:

I should be an ungrateful wretch if I didn't tell you that the geese were excellent. The servants polished theirs entirely off; and ours was admired and appreciated by everybody who partook thereof. I carved, and I need not say some of the best slices of the bosom were appropriated to yours gratefully,

[Here followed a drawing of geese on a green]

HYMN THE FIRST

The housewives of a former age
Were wont to stuff a Goose with sage.
You put the Bird to nobler use,
Carter! and stuff a sage with goose.

HYMN THE SECOND

"Lawk, Miss Annv, Lawk, Miss Minny!" thus cries Gray the cook,
"Two such beautiful geese is come! Only come and look!

"Lor, how plump and brown they'll be! Lor, how plump and juicy!
Well, of half things I declare I do love a goosey!

"Two fat geese, how genteel! Only think of this, miss!
Don't they come convenient for the dinner at Crissmiss!"

"One shall be for the Servants' 'Al, and one for parloour arter
And I never shall see a goose again, without thinking of Mr. Carter."

"That I won't," says Mrs. Gray the cook, with her duty, and the best compliments of the season.

And the same she hopes *nex year*.

[Drawing of a boy standing on his head, captioned "Turn over"]

On second thoughts; and in allusion to a painful transaction last year:

No, this pun is so dreadfully bad,

I think I never can, sir,

But when a man sends me

A goose and a deuced kind letter, I think I might send him an *anser*.

Well, I shall next year; that's all I have to say.

An artist who could establish a world vogue for her drawings, and a disciple who could adorn a friendship, Kate Greenaway could also pen a businesslike note.

23. April 1881

Dear

I have been waiting for
a further communication from
you. as to time,

At present I have not
time to give you a
sitting, and am afraid I
shall not be able to do
so for the next six weeks.
As soon as I have the
time I will write and
appoint a day.

Yours truly
K Greenaway.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was an admirer of Kate Greenaway's drawings, and she found his kindly advice and criticism very helpful. In gratitude she had sent him a book of poems. This letter, written on Christmas Day, 1881, is his gracious acknowledgment.

You are the first friend to whom I write this morning, and among the few to whom I look for real sympathy and help. You are fast becoming—I believe you are already, except only Edward B. Jones—the helpfulest in showing me that there are yet living souls on earth

who can see beauty and peace and goodwill among men—and rejoice in them.

You have sent me a little choir of such angels as are ready to sing, if we will listen, for Christ's being born—every day.

I trust you may long be spared to do such lovely things, and be an element of the best happiness in every English household that still has an English heart, as you are already in the simpler homes of Germany.

To my mind Ludwig Richter and you are the only real philosophers of the nineteenth century.

I'll write more in a day or two about many things that I want to say respecting the possible range of your subjects. I was made so specially happy yesterday by finding Herrick's *Grace* among the little poems; but they are all delightful.

The letter below was written by the secretary of a boy's club after thirty members interested in newspaper work had returned from a visit to a large newspaper plant.

We had a grand time going thru your establishment the other day—Wednesday, the third of April, to be exact.

This is written to thank you for all we saw and all we learned and—for all we ate at that unexpected and undeserved spread you gave us on the second-floor corridor.

Whether you meant to do it or not—perish the thought!—you have made — readers of our families, even unto the third and the fourth generation. You have thus helped to train us up in the way we should go.

So thank you again—and yet again. And give our very best to those human machines of yours—the giant presses and the linotype prodigies.

The head of the house makes an employee's heart glad by a note of thanks for a good, understandable report

Thank you very much indeed for the excellent report you placed on my desk yesterday. I took it home with me last evening, and before midnight I had read every word of it and had studied those six graphs till I know them almost by heart. I am this morning very much better informed about the — branch of this business, and, thanks to you, shall be able to talk intelligently about it when I attend the convention next week. There are two or three little things that I must ask you about before I leave, but these can easily be attended to on Thursday when, you know, you are to have luncheon with me. In the meantime, accept my gratitude and my congratulations on the most lucid and readable report I have had the pleasure of reading in a long time.

Dr. Henry G. Apple, who recently retired as president of Franklin and Marshall College after a highly distinguished administration

of a quarter of a century, penned the following gracious letter to an "old grad" who had had the temerity to present some poor little evidences of authorship. It was just such characteristic thoughtfulness and consideration as this, during his long and enviable career as an educator, that in no small way justified the honors that were showered upon him on his retirement and that brought new glories to the so-called small college as a phenomenal institution of learning.³⁰

Thank you very much indeed for the two new volumes of yours that have just reached me.

I appreciate your kindness, and I know that I shall *again* find both pleasure and profit in the study of your works.

We have all been deeply interested in you, and we rejoice in your continued success and increasing eminence as educator and writer. You are leading the way in a field that needs emphasis and guidance such as you are so abundantly and impressively contributing. Accept our congratulations and our best wishes for future attainment and service.

This acknowledgment has been delayed by my absence from home. Please forgive its seeming tardiness.

HOSPITALITY

Much has been written about hospitality or bread-and-butter letters, and many such letters have been accumulated in anthologies. But letters written by hosts or hostesses inviting friends to visit, regretting the departure of guests, or giving accounts of visits paid, are by no means common to the pages of literature. Below are a few such letters that are good reading and are perhaps worthy of study. They illustrate an important classification in literature, and a not unimportant one in business.

Cicero (106-43 B.C.) in this letter to Atticus reveals the concern and nervousness that are not uncommon to the fastidious host or hostess when an important guest is to be entertained. To this day and age, the letter has a quaint, not to say ironic, humor.

O this visitor so much dreaded! And yet one whose visit I am not sorry to have received; for it went off most pleasantly.

When we came the evening before, on the 18th, to my neighbour Philippus, the house was so crowded with soldiers, that there was hardly a vacant room for Cæsar to sup in. There were about two thousand of them, which made me feel no little uneasiness for the next day. But Barba Cussius set me at ease. He assigned me a guard; made the rest encamp in the fields; so that my house was kept clear. On the 19th, he staid with Philippus till one o'clock; but

³⁰ Used by permission of Dr. Henry G. Apple.

admitted nobody. He was settling accounts, as I suppose, with Balbus. He then walked by the shore to my house. At two he took the bath. The verses on Mamurra were read to him. His countenance was unchanged. He was rubbed, and anointed, and then he disposed himself at table, after taking an emetic; and ate and drank in a very free and easy manner; for he was entertained hospitably and elegantly; and our discourse resembled our repast in its relish and seasoning. Besides Cæsar's table, his attendants were well provided for in three other rooms; nor was there any deficiency in the provision made for his freedmen of lower quality, and his slaves; but those of the better sort were elegantly entertained. Need I add more? I acted as man with man. Yet he was not the man to whom one would say at parting, "I pray let me have this visit repeated when you come this way again." Once is enough. Not a word passed between us on business, but much literary talk. To make short of the matter, he was perfectly pleased and easy. He talked of spending one day at Puteoli; another at Baiæ. You have thus the account of the day's entertainment—an entertainment not agreeable, but still not troublesome to me. I shall stay here a little longer, and then to Tusculum.

As he passed by Dolabella's villa, his troops marched close by the side of his horse, on the right and left; which was done nowhere else. I had this from Nicias.

The following letter, dated September 17, 1793, was written to Agnes and Mary Berry by Horace Walpole after they had paid him a long visit. Doubtless the "antediluvian" found himself lonesome, as who has not after entertaining congenial guests. He had persuaded them to take possession of his home, formerly called Cliveden for Kitty Clive the actress. He left this as well as other property to them when he died. The Misses Berry had literary ambitions and interests of their own. (See page 91.)

My Beloved Spouses,

Whom I love better than Solomon loved his one spouse—or his one thousand. I lament that the summer is over; not because of its unicity, but because you two made it so delightful to me that six weeks of gout could not sour it. Pray take care of yourselves—not for your own sakes, but for mine; for, as I have just had my quota of gout, I may possibly expect to see another summer; and, as you allow that I do know my own, and when I wish for anything and have it, am entirely satisfied, you may depend upon it that I shall be as happy with a third summer, if I reach it, as I have been with the two last.

Consider that I have been threescore years and ten looking for a society that I perfectly like; and at last there dropped out of the clouds into Lady Herrie's room two young gentlewomen, who I so little thought were sent thither on purpose for me, that when I was told they were the charming Miss Berrys, I would not even go to the side of the chamber where they sat. But, as Fortune never throws anything at one's head without hitting one, I soon found that the

charming Berrys were precisely *ce qu'il me fallait*,³⁷ and that though young enough to be my great grand-daughters, lovely enough to turn the heads of all our youths, and sensible enough, if said youths have any brains, to set all their heads to rights again. Yes, sweet damsels, I have found that you can bear to pass half your time with an antediluvian, without discovering any *ennui* or disgust; though his greatest merit towards you is, that he is not one of those old fools who fancy they are in love in their dotage. I have no such vagary; though I am not sorry that some folks think I am so absurd, since it frets their selfishness.

On June 11, 1839, Sydney Smith (see page 276), "relayed" the following invitation in his own gracious way to Charles Dickens. The canon, the rector, and the vicar are, of course, Smith himself. The Miss Berrys were friends of Horace Walpole and prominent figures in the literary world at the time (see above).

Nobody more, and more justly, talked of than yourself.

The Miss Berrys, now at Richmond, live only to become acquainted with you, and have commissioned me to request you to dine with them on Friday, the 29th, or Monday, July 1st, to meet a Canon of St. Paul's, the Rector of Combe Florey, and the Vicar of Halberton—all equally well known to you, to say nothing of other and better people. The Miss Berrys and Lady Charlotte Lindsay have not the smallest objection to be put into a number, but, on the contrary, would be proud of the distinction; and Lady Charlotte, in particular, you may marry to Newman Noggs. Pray come, it is as much as my place is worth to send them a refusal.

Walter Scott was famous for his hospitality. The following letter is only one of many such from his pen. It was written to Maria Edgeworth on June 9, 1823, and it is hardly necessary to add that she accepted the invitation on the terms indicated.

I have just received your kind note, just when I had persuaded myself it was most likely I should see you in person or hear of your arrival. Mr. Allison writes to me you are engaged to drive with him tomorrow, which puts Roslin out of the question for that day, as it might keep you late. On Sunday I hope you will join our family party at five, and on Monday I have asked one or two of the northern lights on purpose to meet you. I should be engrossing at any time, but we shall be more disposed to be so just now, because on the 12th I am under the necessity of going to a different kingdom (only the kingdom of *Fife*) for a day or two. Tomorrow, if it is quite agreeable, I will wait on you about twelve and hope you will permit me to show you some of our improvements.—I am always most respectfully yours,

P.S.—Our old family coach is *licensed* to carry six, so take no care on that score. I enclose Mr. Alison's note; truly sorry I could not accept the invitation it contains.

³⁷ What I needed.

P.S.—My wife insists I shall add that the Laird of Staffa promised to look in on us this evening at eight or nine, for the purpose of letting us hear one of his clansmen sing some Highland boat songs and the like, and that if you will come, as the Irish should to the Scotch, without any ceremony, you will hear what is perhaps more curious than mellifluous. The man returns to the Isles tomorrow. There are no strangers with us; no party; none but all our own family and two old friends.

Moreover, all our womankind have been calling it Gibb's hotel, so if you are not really tired and late, you have not even pride, the ladies' last defence, to oppose to this request. But, above all, do not fatigue yourself and the young ladies.

No dressing to be thought of.

This letter, both a friendly and a business invitation, was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) to James Henry Leigh Hunt. Hunt with his wife and seven children went to Italy, and Shelley was drowned on his return from welcoming them. The publication—called The Liberal—was realized, but only four numbers were actually published, inasmuch as Hunt and Byron could not get along, as Hunt might have anticipated from the lack of assurance in this letter. The letter was written from Pisa on August 26, 1821.

Since I last wrote to you, I have been on a visit to Lord Byron at Ravenna. The result of this visit was a determination, on his part, to come and live at Pisa, and I have taken the finest palace on the Lung' Arno for him. But the material part of my visit consists in a message which he desires me to give you, and which, I think, ought to add to your determination—for such a one I hope you have formed—of restoring your shattered health and spirits by a migration to these "regions mild of calm and serene air." He proposes that you should come and go shares with him and me, in a periodical work, to be conducted here; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all his original compositions, and share the profits. He proposed it to Moore, but for some reason it was never brought to bear. There can be no doubt that the *profits* of any scheme in which you and Lord Byron engage, must, from various, yet cooperating reasons, be very great. As for myself, I am, for the present, only a sort of link between you and him, until you can know each other, and effectuate the arrangement; since (to entrust you with a secret which, for your sake, I withhold from Lord Byron) nothing would induce me to share in the profits, and still less, in the borrowed splendour of such a partnership.

You and he, in different manners, would be equal, and would bring, in a different manner, but in the same proportion, equal stocks of reputation and success. Do not let my frankness with you, nor my belief that you deserve it more than Lord Byron, have the effect of deterring you from assuming a station in modern literature, which the universal voice of my contemporaries forbids me either to stoop or to aspire to. I am, and I desire to be, nothing. I did not ask Lord

Byron to assist me in sending a remittance for your journey; because there are men, however excellent, from whom we would never receive an obligation, in the worldly sense of the word; and I am as jealous for my friend as for myself; but I suppose that I shall at last make up an impudent face, and ask Horace Smith to add to the many obligations he has conferred on me. I know I need only ask. I think I have never told you how very much I like your *Amyntas*; it almost reconciles me to translations. In another sense I still demur. You might have written another such poem as the *Nymphs*, with no great access of efforts. I am full of thoughts and plans, and should do something, if the feeble and irritable frame which incloses it was willing to obey the spirit. I fancy that then I should do great things. Before this you will have seen *Adonais*. Lord Byron, I suppose from modesty, on account of his being mentioned in it, did not say a word of *Adonais*, though he was loud in his praise of *Prometheus*, and, what you will not agree with him in, censure of the *Cenci*. Certainly, if *Marino Faliero* is a drama, the *Cenci* is not—but that between ourselves. Lord Byron is reformed, as far as gallantry goes, and lives with a beautiful and sentimental Italian lady who is as much attracted to him as may be. I trust greatly to his intercourse with you, for his creed to become as pure as he thinks his conduct is. He has many generous and exalted qualities, but the canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out.

William Makepeace Thackeray wrote the following notes in 1848 to the Reverend W. H. Brookfield, his closest friend. Thackeray was living alone in London at the time.

When I came home last night I found a beautiful opera ticket for this evening—Jenny Lind, charming bally, box 72. I am going to dine at home with the children and shall go to the opera, and shall leave your name down below. So come, and we shall sit, we two, and see the piece like two lords, and we can do the other part afterwards. I present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Brookfield, and am yours,

Will you dine with me on Friday at the G? My work will be just over on that day, and bedad, we'll make a night of it and go to the play. On Thursday I shall dine here and Sunday most *probbly*, and shall we go to Richmond on Sunday? Make your game and send me word.

P.S.—Having occasion to write to a man in Bloomsbury Place, and to Lady Dauby, I mixed up the addresses and am too mean to throw away the envelope, so give you the benefit of the same.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) wrote this informal invitation to his old Cambridge friend, the Rev. Peter Wood. Needless to say, Wood paid him a visit on receipt of the letter, and he found Kingsley "roughly lodged" but quite happy nevertheless. Christ gave the name BOANERGES to the two sons of Zebedee (Mark iii: 17). It means "vehement preacher" or "thunderer," as Kingsley humorously uses it here.

PETER!--Whether in the glaring saloons of Almack's, or making love in the equestrian stateliness of the park, or the luxurious recumbency of the ottoman, whether breakfasting at one, or going to bed at three, thou art still Peter, the beloved of my youth, the staff of my academic days, the regret of my parochial retirement! Peter! I am alone! Around me are the everlasting hills, and the everlasting bores of the country! My parish is peculiar for nothing but want of houses and abundance of peat bogs: my parishioners remarkable only for aversion to education, and a predilection for fat bacon. I am wasting my sweetness on the desert air—I say my sweetness, for I have given up smoking, and smell no more. Oh, Peter, Peter, come down and see me! O that I could behold your head towering above the fir trees that surround my lonely dwelling. Take pity on me! I am like a kitten in the washhouse copper with the lid on! And, Peter, prevail on some of your friends to give me a day's trout fishing, for my hand is getting out of practice. But, Peter, I am, considering the oscillations and perplexing circumgurgitations of this piece-meal world, an improved man. I am much more happy, much more comfortable, reading, thinking, and doing my duty—much more than ever I did before in my life. Therefore I am not discontented with my situation, or regretful that I buried my first-class in a country curacy, like the girl who shut herself up in a handbox on her wedding night (*vide Rogers' Italy*). And my lamentations are not general (for I do not want an inundation of the froth and tide-wash of Babylon the Great), but particular, being solely excited by want of thee, oh Peter, who art very pleasant to me, and wouldst be more so if thou wouldst come and eat my mutton, and drink my wine, and admire my sermons, some Sunday at Eversley.

Your faithful friend,

BOANERGES ROAR-AT-THE-CLOUDS

Professor Walter Raleigh (later Sir Walter Raleigh) wrote the following hospitality letter to Mrs. Walter Crum at whose house he had been a guest. His facetious imitation of the composition of the Litany will be recognized. The date is April 30, 1905.³⁸

I was back at Oxford at seven o'clock that same day. I am drawing up a liturgy for use after a visit.

For all the pleasures of my visit I beg you to accept my thanks.

For the shelter of Dalnotter, for the room in the Permanent Resident's Wing, for the fire of an evening and the tea of a morning. I beg you to accept my thanks.

For the services of Plantagenet and labours of the staff, I beg, &c.

For all the viands of the Table, for the Five Meals and Fifty Dishes, for the fishes and birds and beasts but especially* (for the Crab) I beg you to accept my thanks.

*(Here shall be inserted the name of any dish which it is desired to commemorate.)

³⁸ Used by permission of Lady Raleigh.

For the beautiful days at Erskine, for the games of golf, for the good strokes of my partners and for the bad strokes of my enemies, I beg you to accept my thanks.

For the noble company of my fellow guests, for the Edinburgh Professor and the Brown Immortelle, for the Lawyer and the Publisher, for the wise man with the two-eared bag and for the man in the mutton-coloured suit, for my supplanter and his helpmate, for the discreet Rose and spirited Carolina and for the man Robert, I beg you to accept my thanks.

For all the drinks and potions, for the tea and the coffee, the claret, and the sherry, for the fifty-one port and the eighty-seven port, for the whiskey and the very old brandy, I beg you to accept my thanks. (Here shall be inserted the Collect for use after Bridge.)

For all my quarrels at Bridge, for my failures to make myself socially useful, for putting J. M. in a swither, for reprehending R. L., and for all ridiculous and offensive behaviour, I humbly beg your pardon. (Here shall be inserted the prayer to be said by those who desire to be asked again.)

You can't tell how much better I am than when I started. The house is bare-boarded and chaotic, but it is improving. Lucie is going to write to you. She says I have been spoiled and she must write all about it.

A bank invites its customers to a house-warming.

The new wing of the — Bank will be open for business on Thursday morning, October tenth.

You and Mrs. Young are invited to be present at a "wing-warming" reception to be given to our old customers on the preceding Wednesday afternoon at four o'clock.

You will be interested, we think, in seeing the new structure, and in having explained to you the novel "gadgets" that have been installed here and there for the safety and convenience of handling your funds.

But more important than anything else is the opportunity that the little party will give the officers of this institution to meet and chat with such appreciated and appreciative customers as you have been over a long period of years. This opportunity does not come our way very often.

A group of employees at headquarters is invited by one of the branches of the firm to a picnic on the grounds.

Thursday next—May thirteenth—has been set aside for your long anticipated visit to our Lawnbrook branch.

Busses will drop you at the north gate (on the Brook Avenue side) at eleven-thirty. It is only a short walk from there to the grove where luncheon will be served.

It is probably unnecessary to tell you to bring bats, balls, rackets, bathing suits, and any other sports equipment you may have, for the great variety of games that may be played on our grounds.

We shall do our best to see to it that "a merry time is had by all." But if it should rain on Thursday, then the picnic will be held the next clear day even tho that doesn't happen till Sunday.

SOLICITATION

Letters of request are sometimes disparagingly called begging letters, but this appellation is by no means always deserved. In the old days when it was customary for aspiring scholars and writers to cultivate patronage among titled folk, the composition of such letters required much tact and skill, and even then they were very often little more than a refined form of beggary. Tho the patronage letter *per se* has today become a rarity, the composition requirements of a letter of request are nevertheless difficult. Any manifestation of the inferiority of begging must be avoided. The letter content must be kept on the high level of justification and worthy purpose. A few illustrative letters are here submitted.

This forthright request for financial aid was written by Ben Jonson to his friend and benefactor, the Earl of Newcastle. It brought the aid requested. (See page 89.)

My Noblest Lord and best Patron,
I send no borrowing epistle to provoke your Lordship, for I have neither fortune to repay, nor security to engage, that will be taken: but I make a most humble petition to your Lordship's bounty to succour my present necessities this good time (festival) of Easter, and it shall conclude all begging requests hereafter on the behalf of your truest beadsman and most thankful servant,

On May 21, 1775, Samuel Johnson came "straight to the point" to Bennett Langton, a member of the Literary Club, of which Johnson himself, Addison, Reynolds, and other famous eighteenth-century men, were members.

I have an old amanuensis in great distress. I have given what I think I can give, and begged till I cannot tell where to beg again. I put into his hands this morning four guineas. If you could collect three guineas more, it would clear him from his present difficulty. I am, sir, your most humble servant,

Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), Scotch physician and novelist, author of "Roderick Random," "Peregrine Pickle," and other novels written in letter form, had a gift for phrase-making, and his "great Cham of literature" has been famous ever since he coined it. He wrote this letter on March 16, 1759, to John Wilkes, a member of Parliament, and a politician of great power—and some scandal. Johnson disliked Wilkes, but Boswell tells amusingly how Wilkes overcame this dislike. The letter speaks for itself, evincing as it does the world-old custom of seeking political influence or "pull" from those who are able to wield it. Francis had "joined up" quite on his own and had not been

pressed into service. But he was discharged and returned to his master.

I am again your petitioner, in behalf of that great CHAM of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the Stag frigate, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat which renders him very unfit for His Majesty's service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you: and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it, than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on this subject, which I leave to your own consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most inviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir, your affectionate, obliged, humble servant,

That begging may be made almost a fine art is shown by the following note written to Lady Holland by Sydney Smith, one of the masters of the art of letter writing. It was written on behalf of his friend the poet, Thomas Campbell.

I told the little poet, after the proper softening of wine, dinner, flattery, repeating his verses, etc., etc., that a friend of mine wished to lend him some money, and I begged him to take it. The poet said that he had a very sacred and serious notion of the duties of independence, that he thought he had no right to be burdensome to others from the mere apprehensions of evil, and that he was in no immediate want. If it was necessary, he would ask me hereafter for the money without scruple; and that the knowing he had such resources in reserve, was a great comfort to him; nor had he the slightest feeling of affront on the subject, but, on the contrary, of great gratitude to his benefactor, whose name I did not mention, as the money was not received; I therefore cancel your draft, and will call upon you, if he calls upon me. This, I presume, meets your approbation. I had a great deal of conversation with him, and he is a much more sensible man than I had any idea of. I have received this morning a very kind letter from Sir Francis Baring, almost amounting to a promise that I am to be a professor in his new Institution. I cannot conclude my letter without telling you that you are a very good lady for what you have done; and that, for it, I give you my hearty benediction.

The following letter by Charles Dickens was written to the actor, William Charles Macready, on October 17, 1845. Needless to say, the famous novelist's "request for a loan" was granted by the celebrated tragedian.

You once—only once—gave the world assurance of a waistcoat. You wore it, sir, I think, in *Money*. It was a remarkable and precious waistcoat, wherein certain broad stripes of blue or purple disported themselves as by a combination of extraordinary circumstances, too happy to occur again. I have seen it on your manly chest in private life. I saw it, sir, I think, the other day in the cold light of morning—with feelings easier to be imagined than described. Mr. Macready, sir, are you a father? If so, lend me that waistcoat for five minutes. I am bidden to a wedding (where fathers are made) and my artist cannot, I find (how should he?) imagine such a waistcoat. Let me show it to him as a sample of my tastes and wishes; and—ha, ha, ha, ha!—eclipse the bridegroom! I shall send a trusty messenger at half-past nine precisely, in the morning. He is sworn to secrecy. He durst not for his life betray us, or swells in ambuscade would have the waistcoat at the cost of his heart's blood.

Thine,
The Unwaistcoated One

This request was made by William James (1842-1910), the great American teacher, psychologist, and philosopher. The human-interest note in this letter (of November 1, 1902) is important in comparison with the businesslike and forceful tone of most of the letters in Part Two. It was written to Henry L. Higginson, Boston banker and philanthropist.³⁰

I am emboldened to the step I am taking by the consciousness that though we are both at least sixty years old and have known each other from the cradle, I have never but once (or possibly twice) traded on your well-known lavishness of disposition to swell any "subscription" which I was trying to raise.

Now the doomful hour has struck. The altar is ready, and I take the victim by the ear. I choose you for a victim because you still have some undesiccated human feeling about you and can think in terms of pure charity—for the love of God, without ulterior hopes of returns from the investment.

The subject is a man of fifty who can be recommended to no other kind of benefactor. His story is a long one, but it amounts to this, that Heaven made him with no other power than that of thinking and writing, and he has proved by this time a truly pathological inability to keep body and soul together. He is abstemious to an incredible degree, is the most innocent and harmless of human beings, isn't propagating his kind, has never had a dime to spend except for vital necessities, and never has had in his life an hour of what such as we call freedom from care or of "pleasure" in the ordinary exuberant sense of the term. He is refinement itself mentally and morally; and his writings have all been printed in first-rate periodicals, but are too scanty to "pay." There's no excuse for him, I admit. But God made him; and after kicking and cuffing and prodding him for twenty years, I have now come to believe that he ought to be treated in charity pure and simple (even though that be a vice) and

³⁰ Used by permission of Little, Brown, and Company.

I want to guarantee him \$350. a year as a pension to be paid to the Mills Hotel in Bleecker Street, New York, for board and lodging and a few cents weekly over and above. I will put in \$150. I have secured \$100. more. Can I squeeze \$50. a year out of you for such a non-public cause? If not, don't reply, and forget this letter. If "ja" and you think you really can afford it, and it isn't wicked, let me know, and I will dun you regularly every year for the \$50.

The following letter of solicitation—most written applications are letters of solicitation—secured for the young man who wrote it exactly the opening he was seeking. He is now a satisfied and contented worker in aviation transportation, and is definitely on his way to important promotions.

Aviation is pretty generally conceded to be a very promising field for a young man, isn't it?

Certainly, it has been growing in scope and possibility within my own comparatively short memory.

And I have read much to the effect that young people of vision, of the scientific type of mind, and of courage to make adventure as well as of inherent power to plod, are greatly in demand.

NOW

I am a college graduate (B.S. from ——).

I am not afraid of overalls or grease or dirty hands.

I know the theory of aviation engineering pretty well but thoroly realize my need for practice.

I have worked for a year in the technical engineering department of the —— Aviation School.

I have returned from the —— flying expedition to Brazil and other South American countries.

I am seeking opportunity to get field and flying practice in order eventually to qualify as a master pilot.

Could you now or at any time in the near future use such a man? If so, will you please consider me?

I enclose a specific statement of my education and service to date, along with copies of a few recommendations and a stamped, addressed envelope.

Too proud to go on relief in 1931, a young student in one of the author's college classes relied upon the following letter which he composed while he was cold and hungry. It secured him a job which he still holds and which has brought him two advances in salary.

I want to work for you.

You may pay me what you want to, when you want to, if you want to.

All I ask is a chance to show you what I can do.

I believe I have ability. I can be useful to you. Give me the opportunity and I shall prove both of these assertions.

But don't misunderstand me, please. I am no genius, and I realize that I'm not. But I can do certain work very well—the kind of work you have to be done—and I can present abundant testimony to the fact that I never shirk

I should like a position on your staff as junior accountant. My qualifications include a college education and four years of experience in the accounting field (see references attached). I am familiar with all of the major phases of accounting and have had experience in applying the basic principles to various kinds of business. But I have had no public experience.

If you care to talk with me—and I hope that you will care to do so after consulting my references—I am free to call at your convenience. I enclose four stamped, addressed envelopes, one of which—to me—I shall look for expectantly when the postman gives his double ring the next few mornings.

I am twenty-six, born American, and I live at home with my father and mother at the above address.

So much by way of brief sampling in general letter reading. Courses in such reading have been laid down for employees by more than one business house, with profitable results. By such reading, business letter writers have had their daily round of letter composition converted from an irksome, perfunctory task into an interesting and stimulating pursuit, and writing as duty and writing as pleasure have for them become synonymous.

Business letter writers will find it to their benefit to observe and adopt, in a measure at least, the methods of their exemplars in the field of literature. All of these latter have "lived with words," have developed the "notebook habit," have cultivated the power of "keen observation," have kept high standards of expression ever before them, have tried to secure to their own expression the rhythm and harmony and coordination of all writing that has conspicuously impressed by distinction of style. Stevenson, Keats, Emerson, Hawthorne, and numerous others, all the way back to Shakespeare and beyond, did these things. "Burns," said Stevenson in his *Memoirs and Portraits*, "is the very type of

prime force in letters [literature]; he was of all men the most imitative. Shakespeare himself, the imperial, proceeds directly from a school."

The "inimitable best" in writing cannot, as the term implies, be imitated really. There can, therefore, be no harm in any one's trying to imitate it. There can be much good achieved by way of practice in imitation of the ever-elusive ideal, failure in the achievement of which makes always and everywhere for individual and individualized success.

The business letter writer must practice in the direction of his inimitable ideal. Unique personal success may perhaps be arrived at thru the very fact that he is unable to ape consummately. Let him at odd moments write out conversations or interviews as he recalls them. Let him for sheer practice report to himself his impressions as he attends a convention or observes workers in factory or in office. Let him record the happenings of certain outstanding days or hours in his daily round of activity. In all these and yet other types of practice let him ever aim at the clearness and the force and the engagingness of the best letter reading he can find in whatever field. And then, well, he will probably not become a genius or even what is sometimes called "an original," for these, like poets, are born, not made. But he will certainly become a better letter-writer as well as a better-letter writer.

CHAPTER TWO

THE YEA AND THE NAY

CLICHÉ

The word *cliché* means, by its French derivation, a stereotype plate or any similar device for the reproduction of ornament or lettering. By transferred epithet it has come to mean any expression that is used over and over again until it is "frozen" or fixed in phraseology, until it gets itself written and spoken automatically and unconsciously. It now stands for robot writing and speaking. Cliché expressions are hackneyed or stereotyped expressions. They are sometimes called bromides, and a bromide is defined by the dictionary as a person who is commonplace and conventional in his habits of thought and conversation. Such expressions used to excess, as they so frequently are or have been in business letter writing, tend to make expression dull, tiresome, dead. They also make for wordiness, vagueness, and discourtesy. They delay reading grasp, therefore, and cause misunderstanding. The following bit of doggerel accumulates most of those that are responsible for the high business-letter death rate:

Your favor is at hand, sir, and its contents duly noted,
And in reply we beg to sav our prices here are quoted.
Attached you'll find in answer to your much esteemed request
Investment opportunities our experts would suggest.
Permit us to inform you in connection with the same,
That herewith also is enclosed our latest stocks by name.
Regarding other questions from your highly valued source,
Just rest assured that you shall hear in due and proper course.
By fifteenth inst. we hope to have the bonds you indicate;
If something happens to prevent we'll write you to so state.
As soon as we've contacted Mr. So-and-So for you
We'll take great pleasure forwarding result of interview.
Regret exceedingly that after all is said and done
The sorry fact remains that he is still his father's son.
We trust that we have answered all your welcome queries duly,
And we remain as always, sir,

Yours faithfully and truly,

It is sometimes said that the very atmosphere of a business office superinduces hackneyed expression. So long has the latter been emanating from the former that a person just naturally "takes

on the tongue" as soon as he enters or even thinks of an office. This may be true. We whisper at a funeral; we yell in appropriate parlance at a football game; we sing in the bathtub. So we probably "go hackneyed" in the business office.

Gerald received at his office a letter from his mother inquiring about his child, her grandchild, who had been ill. Almost before he knew it he had dictated and mailed the following letter to her!

Dear Madam:

Yours of the fifteenth inst. received, and contents duly noted. In reply beg to state that I thank you for same. Confirming my communication of some little time ago, take pleasure in informing you that the party subject of your inquiry leaves nothing to be desired by way of health and apparent happiness. Will inform you in due course, in the event of any change to the contrary. At present writing would say that no such problem now confronts us in the situation. As per doctor's orders physical examinations are made weekly. Rest assured that you will be notified at our earliest convenience in case any unforeseen emergency arises. Trusting I have furnished the desired information to your entire satisfaction, and again thanking you for your very kind thought and consideration, beg to remain with all good wishes

Your loving son,

GERALD

Now, it is not contended, of course, that every time we speak and write we must attempt to use phraseology that has never been used before. Even if we could do so, it would not be very long before that very phraseology would become stale and down-at-heel. And it is true that a certain amount of familiar phraseology is desirable in all speaking and writing. It yields, as has been pointed out on page 6, a "homeyness" and intimacy, and puts one immediately on common ground with his interlocutor. But to be dependent upon cliché expressions in speaking and writing is to be not merely unoriginal but lazy, stupid, tedious, and deadly dull. A cliché letter is always a bore, as undoubtedly is the one who writes or dictates it.

It is impossible and unnecessary, of course, to list all the cliché expressions in English. They pass and come again; they vary to some extent with locality. But the following is a goodly list. When Mr. and Mrs. Bromide entertain Mr. and Mrs. Wallflower you may be sure that their conversation consists pretty largely if not entirely of these:

really
say listen
absolutely
positively
marvelous
wonderful
sigh of relief
as pleased as Punch
never spoke a truer word
the talking points
is he coming or going
it goes without saying
a snare and a delusion
a man's-size job
blood is thicker than water
heard the lion
my own flesh and blood
keep the wolf from the door
with hammer and tongs
take the bull by the horns
the business world
the course of human events
let the cat out of the bag
by fits and starts
don't count your chickens before
they're hatched
as snug as a bug in a rug
don't cross your bridges till you
come to them
I don't care a hoot for money
don't put the cart before the horse
a rude awakening
the disdain he so richly deserves
a bed of roses
grin and bear it
all too soon
ups and downs
play the game
nip and tuck
with flying colors
sail under false colors
dull as dishwater
breakneck speed
with a grain of salt
hit below the belt
fine and dandy
put your shoulder to the wheel
at sixes and sevens
beat a retreat
stick to your guns
wrack and ruin
pull up stakes
pride and joy
sleep like a log
in due course

in the arms of Morpheus
by leaps and bounds
wended their way
working like Trojans
with all due modesty
venture to say
a civil question
take to task
without rhyme or reason
buck up
revealed in true colors
level criticism
straight from the shoulder
down in luck
a blighted romance
up to no good
unrequited love
cast into the discard
worships the ground she walks on
pass the time of day
just in the nick of time
steal the march on
to be permitted to say so
beg the question
fill the bill
stand his ground
give pause
turn over a new leaf
say the word
playing second fiddle
as per
answer the purpose
carrying coals to Newcastle
meet the situation
insofar as
in regard to
bury the hatchet
mind your P's and Q's
in relation to
oil on troubled waters
making head or tail
at an early date
leaving no stone unturned
stew in your own juice
on the other hand
a bone to pick
grant me that
strike while the iron is hot
along these lines
shake a leg
stir his stumps
in this connection
pull yourself together
bend every effort
as above mentioned

in accordance with
 get a grip on yourself
 pocket my pride
 as the case may be
 put my best foot forward
 pay the supreme penalty
 however that may be
 flatter myself
 mince words
 gird up your loins
 as a matter of fact
 mark time
 save your face
 knit your brow
 earliest convenience
 as to our proposition
 peals of laughter
 see eye to eye
 now, on the other hand
 owing to the fact that
 take a turn
 keep a civil tongue
 at the present writing
 in connection therewith
 with your kind permission
 never batted an eyelid
 keep a stiff upper lip
 whatever the situation may be
 let us call your attention to
 brave the elements
 at one and the same time
 rest assured
 at the earliest possible moment
 in my official capacity
 we are taking the matter up with
 amicable arrangement
 insofar as it is humanly possible
 so you see you will make no mis-
 take
 word has come
 noised abroad
 parting of the ways
 same shall receive our prompt at-
 tention
 *circumstances over which we have
 no control
 colorful scene
 tendered a reception
 martial tread
 persistent rumors
 esteemed guest
 highly respected
 reliable source
 deadly earnest
 well-known citizen

gala affair
 we take pleasure in handing or
 sending you herewith
 perfect agreement
 unconfirmed report
 overcome by emotion
 prostrated by grief
 decorations tastefully arranged
 thru an inadvertence on the part
 of our mailing dept.
 filled to capacity
 host of friends
 momentous occasion
 escaped unscathed
 situation to be reckoned with
 in the last analysis
 venture an opinion
 long-felt want
 entire gamut of human emotions
 get down to brass tacks
 most certainly do
 suit the action to the word
 our humble abode
 speed the day
 doomed to disappointment
 peach of a fellow
 praise to the skies
 a diamond in the rough
 coin phrases
 all wool and a yard wide
 beggar description
 too full for utterance
 settle his hash
 throngs of boon companions
 report progress
 checkered career
 burn the candle at both ends
 poke fun at
 a highly likable fellow
 run amuck
 sadder but wiser
 up in arms
 hit the ceiling
 order out of chaos
 a square shooter
 go off the handle
 in the depths of despair
 let well enough alone
 along the line of
 drunk with power
 take into account
 method in his madness
 the mirror of fashion
 deem it advisable
 at cross purposes

shudder to think
music hath charms
at swords' points
put in an appearance
ulterior motives
get the upper hand
a vicious circle
bring the matter up
a sneaking suspicion
bring him down a notch
the finger of scorn
let the matter drop

all work and no play
with malice aforethought
make things hum
dead as a doornail
speak in terms of
gathered unto his fathers
under the weather
as good as my word
think the thing through
a watery grave in the briny deep
have it on high authority
buckle down

Perhaps the following excerpt, from one of a series of booklets issued by a large concern for the purpose of improving its letters, may be used as appropriate conclusion of this section: ¹

To evolve you must eliminate; to develop you must discard. This is an unailing law. Nature is constantly eradicating remnants in order that she may weave new fabrics unhindered. She purges to progress. And man is ever abandoning the useless old and adopting the useful new. He rejects in order to revise and reform.

This inevitable law has revolutionized letter thought, letter construction, and letter achievement. When letters were written with a goose quill, it was perhaps in keeping to begin them with *I-now-take-my-pen-in-hand*. And it was to be expected that there should be such lineal descendants from the goose-quill period as *beg to advise, in reply would say, enclosed herewith, attached hereto, as per, hoping to receive, as the case may be*.

But the unchangeable law works. Inventive genius has provided office machinery that produces letters as if by magic, and letter phraseology has been obliged to move apace. The goose quill is a relic. *I-now-take-my-pen-in-hand, replying-to-your-inquiry-of*, and their brother bromides, are proved to be worthless, wasteful, business-destroying débris. They have been legislated out. They no longer move in the best letter circles.

It is an impertinence to blur and bungle so precious a thing as human thought with, "In reply to your communication of January 25, regarding our cretonnes, I beg to be permitted to say that." Here are twenty useless words that must be read before the meat of the matter if any, is reached. They defy the law of elimination. They disgust the alert business man who must read them. They have more than once been the cause of his discontinuing business with the house that goose-quilled them. They are vestiges of the papyrus that murder his time and dissipate his thinking.

The present-day business letter should absorb and reflect the constructive spirit of the time. It should not be a mere bill or receipt, query or answer, complaint or adjustment. It should not merely present facts. It should *build*, and to do this efficiently it must eliminate every single word and syllable and punctuation mark that

fall short of the point. More, it must radiate very definitely these five requisites on the part of the writer—knowledge of his subject, belief in its purpose, ambition for its success, enthusiasm for the men behind it, consideration for the men before it—the men to whom he is writing.

COURTESY

It is always well to remember that the word *courtesy* is derived from a French word meaning courtliness, and that it is in no way related to *curt*, from Latin *curtus*, meaning short or blunt or brusque in the sense of rudeness. The pronunciation—kûr'-tê-sî—is perhaps unfortunate. At any rate there are even yet letter writers who seem to mistake its derivation.

Courtesy in business letter writing means, for one thing, the ability and the inclination to say *no* agreeably. No more frequent, no more difficult test has to be met by the average business man, on his average day, than this one of saying *no* without offending or hurting. He should never say it in a letter without explaining why he has to do so. He must never say it without putting himself in the place of the person to whom he says it, thus trying to do unto others as he would have others do unto him. He must never say it without realizing that his *no* of today may have to be his *yes* of tomorrow, that "I don't want anything today" may tomorrow have to be "I've simply got to have it!"

But courtesy in business letter writing means more than anything else the service attitude, the nothing-is-too-much-trouble spirit, the soft answer that turneth away wrath. It builds pleasant, wholesome, progressive business relationships. There are many temptations in business correspondence for a letter writer to dictate a curt or cutting message, but for purely selfish reasons, if for no better ones, he will do well to walk the proverbial ten miles before yielding to these temptations. A single discourteous word in a business letter may cost a company or an individual hundreds of dollars. The challenge of courtesy may be difficult to meet, especially on those occasions when unreasonableness and temperament have to be countered. But it must be met and mastered by any one who would be a successful business letter writer.

The bad habit of referring to a letter as a favor derived legitimately enough from the fact that a letter is or should be a service courtesy, a graceful expression of good will, a genuine favor. But the word *favor* is hackneyed now, used in reference to a

letter, and in all too many cases it would be a misnomer even if it were in good epistolary repute.

Courtesy in the true sense must reveal sincere friendliness and real desire to be cooperative. It is helped always, of course, by manifestations of politeness. Such symbols of politeness as *please, pardon me, I'm sorry, forgive me* cannot well be used too often in business letters. Politeness is an outer manifestation of courtesy; it is not courtesy itself but it always accompanies courtesy. Genuine courtesy is able to tell an ugly truth without giving offense, and politeness lubricates the process. Tact, by comparison, is studied and designing; it is concerned with ulterior motives: it will evade or sidetrack an issue, if need be, for the sake of smooth sailing. It is courtesy minus. But it is an essential in business as it is in politics and in social life generally.

Discourtesy most frequently results from an attitude of superiority. But it results from many other causes. Its manifestations vary according to individual moods. A few types of discourtesy in business letters, that is, of epistolary impertinence, may here be set down for, it is hoped, profitable discussion:

- Display of bad temper—"grouchiness"
- Sarcasm—the "conversational carving-knife"
- Disciplinary attitude—calling the other fellow to order
- Aggressive positiveness—the we-are-always-right attitude
- Placement of blame for dissatisfaction upon a third party
- Invasion of direct and adequate replies to comment and inquiry
- Indifferent or negative attitude toward just and honest appeal
- Smartness or flippancy—an attempt to be witty, clever, or "different"
- Overemphasis of the you-attitude, and, thus, transparent insincerity
- Careless and freakish composition and letter form
- Slipshod and "lazy" English—grammar, spelling, punctuation, cliché, etc.
- Incorrect spelling of proper names, especially personal names

Any such classification must have its dangers. This one has been deduced from the examination of many letters, and its items represent general findings over a broad field of business subject-matter. It serves as guidance in at least three fairly large business concerns today from the correspondence of which some of the following illustrative material is taken.

This is blunt and tactless:

You did not keep your promise about having your truck pick up the goods which have been ready and waiting for several days.

This is tactful but nothing more:

We may have misunderstood but we thought you were going to have your truck pick up the goods. They were ready on the date you desired them.

This is courteous:

Our truck left this morning with the goods and you should have them early tomorrow. We held them here because we understood that your truck was to stop on its way back to pick them up. Please pardon the delay, and trust us to do better next time.

Lincoln once advised a man, who was in his presence speaking disparagingly of another person, to put all his abuse in a letter. The man did so, and Lincoln approved both the letter and its writer. "How would you advise me to send it?" asked the man, pleased with himself for winning distinguished approval. "Send it?" replied Lincoln. "Oh, I wouldn't send it. I sometimes write a letter like that, and it does me good, but I never send it."

Literature abounds with excellent letters that were written for personal outlet and satisfaction but never mailed. Mrs. Browning's letter to Napoleon is a famous example. The poet Shelley wrote many a letter for "psychological relief," as did Howell (see page 10), Cowper, Walpole, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lord Chesterfield, Johnson, and numerous other littérateurs. And the fictitious letters to be found in plays and novels—from Shakespeare to Dickens—are models of epistolary art.

If you are confronted with letter situations that seem to invite you to be blunt and brusque, write, if you must, but *do not send* the retorts discourteous. It is always better to let them wait while you turn to those that are less likely to "tickle the temper." Then, when you return to the peppery epistles, you will be more likely to say tactfully, politely, courteously

THIS

We failed to make our instructions clear.

Pardon us for misleading you.

Your point of view is well taken but there is this to be said, we think, for the other side of the case.

We probably omitted our premium offers in our former letter to you.

NOT THIS

You have not understood our instructions.

You're on the wrong track.

You've got the wrong point of view about this case.

You have overlooked our premium offers.

THIS

Sorry you have had trouble with that mousetrap. We should have been more detailed about its use.

We are very much disturbed by your claim that we have overcharged.

Forgive us for not making our terms clear to you.

We had hoped that we deserved better treatment.

We are not quite clear as to just what you mean.

Your letter with remittance was received today.

The remittance you mentioned in your letter was not enclosed, we are sorry to say.

Your right foot is smaller than your left.

Perhaps we failed to enclose the explanatory folder, or it may have rattled down thru the machine somehow. We enclose another one. On page four you will find explicit directions about the lever.

NOT THIS

You should have followed our advice.

Your complaint about our overcharging is a hot one.

You are in error about our terms.

You have failed us again.

Do you deliberately imply that we have misrepresented?

Your undated letter with remittance was received today.

You neglected to enclose the remittance you mentioned.

Your left foot is larger than your right.

Please take the time and trouble to read the explanatory folder we sent you with the machine. You will then have no difficulty about operating the lever.

Does the morning mail bring this pathological pertness to your desk?

Can't you people get anything right in any way for anybody at any time?

It is annoying. You are strongly inclined to answer it in kind. But you restrain your emotions, and dictate

THIS

We are sorry. Please forgive us for the stupid mistake we have made.

NOT THIS

Yes'm. We get everything right in every way for everybody all the time—with a justifiable exception now and then—meaning YOU.

Do you find this trenchant treat awaiting you as you arrive at the office one morning?

Your delivery service intrigues me strangely. You promise goods positively for Thursday and they arrive the following Monday. Honestly, I should think many of your customers might pass out between orders and deliveries. Perhaps that's the idea!

You *could* answer as your ruffled temper prompts. But waiting a little while you find your better nature dictating

THIS

We are very much disturbed about our failure to deliver the goods as promised, last Thursday. Our delivery department reports that calls were made at your residence twice a day since the goods were purchased, but that the house was locked and no one could be found to receive them. We shall of course cancel the order now, if you wish, and reimburse your account for the amount involved.

NOT THIS

If you'd stay at home, kind lady, long enough to permit our men to deliver, or if you'd just be considerate enough to leave a door unlocked or have a neighbor look after your purchases, you'd get your goods as and when. What is it—perennial bridge or cocktail parties?

Perhaps this dictatorial delirium greets you on yet another morning:

We explained to you explicitly just when and where and how that piano was to be shipped. Please consult your files. We're too busy to play repeats for anybody, especially for those who cannot follow directions the first time.

You are, of course, "pawing to let go" in answering this one. But you rein in and say

THIS

We are very sorry indeed that you are displeased with our handling of your order. Your letter of — said that you were attaching to it both a diagram and an explanation in regard to shipping. But, pardon us, no such attachment was found. This was our reason for troubling you again with our letter of —. Won't you please send us a copy of it, if the original is not to be found? We shall yet be able to get the piano off in time. Please use the enclosed stamped addressed envelope or wire us collect.

NOT THIS

The whenness and the whereness and the howness (not to mention the whyiness) of your highly esteemed courtesy touches us deeply! But just consult your files, such as they must be, and you'll see what you shall see, namely, that you never sent the instructions promised. We've been waiting, sweetheart!

Again, the following note reaches out to you "early of a business dawn":

Your letter surprises us. These braces have always given satisfaction before. In fact, yours is the first and only complaint we've had. Are you quite sure you have given them a fair trial?

In reply you deservedly take credit unto yourself for saving

THIS

Sorry, but we have investigated the claims and find them in every case bona fide. It just happened, probably, that there were a few bad items that crept in to that last shipment. But this is nothing at all compared to the flawless record you have with us.

Sales are moving just as rapidly as ever nevertheless. Will you please send replacements as soon as you can?

NOT THIS

There must always be a first sometime somewhere. We're IT now and here. None of which matters. Get the order filled. Our customers are waiting.

A certain customer's epistolary "Good morning" to you is this:

Why in the world don't you fill orders correctly just once in a while! Then a spark of faith might remain in me. Come get the mules you sent me—they are the wrong size yet and again!

And you send a messenger with a note saying

THIS

Please forgive us—again! They shall be right this time. Please give the mules to the special messenger and make him write the correct size at your dictation. And he shall come straight back to you with the correct merchandise.

NOT THIS

Answering your courtesy in reverse order seriatim (1) The muleteer must drive the mules in personally if she wants them changed (2) We somehow or other never get things right for people who bray at us

It is always discourteous to some one—it is not even very tactful --to place blame for a mistake upon a third person or a "third department." Instead of trying "to get out from under," say

THIS

We regret the inconvenience you have been caused by our inexcusable error. Please forgive us. We are sending the correct brand by special messenger who will bring back to us the one wrongly delivered to you.

NOT THIS

Owing to a mistake by our shipping department (or order clerk or chief of deliveries) the wrong brand was delivered to your residence.

It is likewise discourteous deliberately to evade a specific sales inquiry in the dubious hope that a general reply will bring the

inquirer dashing into your shop. A prospect wrote to inquire the price of a certain piece of pottery that she had seen in a shop window. The reply should have been

THIS

The jar you mention is \$50. Inasmuch as this is only one of many of the same kind displayed on our second floor, you will be interested, we think, in seeing them all before making a purchase. We are enclosing a ticket for our special preview on Friday and Saturday evenings. Won't you come, please, and bring a friend?

NOT THIS

We have a very fine stock of Sicilian pottery, and shall be pleased to have you come in to look it over.

But sometimes the shop is right as well as the customer. At any rate this note braces you for the day and makes your dictation easy and pleasant, no matter what bitterness you may find in your correspondence cup:

Thank you for your fair and square attitude in regard to that set of dishes. I have investigated thoroly, and found that the breakage was due entirely to carelessness in my own household.

Note in the following mixed examples the courteous, constructive, YEA attitude in comparison with the discourteous, business-destroying NAY attitude:

THIS

Thank you for your inquiry of May tenth. We cannot supply the book you mention, we are sorry to say, because we do not publish it, and we handle only our own publications. It is published by Bradford and Worthington, 221 Arverne Boulevard, and if you address them you will be able to get it at once. The price, by the way, is \$3.75, not \$2.75 as you indicated in your letter.

NOT THIS

Replying to your inquiry of 10th inst. beg to say that we do not publish the book you mention.

Thank you for the reminder. We have the date—March tenth—on our tickler, and we shall try our best to get the goods to you even earlier than this. You may feel quite safe in telling your customers that you will not disappoint them.

Your second inquiry at hand. Your request for delivery of goods by March tenth is noted. We shall certainly not be able to deliver them a minute sooner.

THIS

We are extremely sorry that our letter of May sixth did not reach you. We enclose a copy of it, and send this letter by special delivery in the hope that the lists will still get to you in time for your purposes.

Thank you for your letter explaining so attractively your new heating system. Inasmuch as we have just installed a new system in our offices we cannot now avail ourselves of the many excellent features that you offer. But we shall keep your letter and your catalog with view to future business.

While we recognize at once the great value of the new telephone device that you so kindly explain in your letter, we are not at present prepared to accept your offer to come in to demonstrate its use. But if you will put us down for follow-up, perhaps we shall be more interested in six months or a year.

The smart-alec attitude is always deplorable in and of itself. It is especially so in business composition because it is invariably subjective, and business composition should be objective. The bootlegger who, during the benighted days of prohibition, circularized prospects with such letters as the following, called attention to his publicity rather than to his stock:

Telephone: 094 WFTmore

Cable Address: Bacchus, N. Y.

THE BOOTLIMB SUPPLY COMPANY,
711 WEST FIFTIETH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

From	<i>Will U Drunkwater</i>	To	<i>Dr I B Dreiman</i>
Subject	<i>New Stocks</i>	Address	<i>Brewsboro</i>
Enclosures	<i>1 price list</i>		<i>New Jersey</i>
Time mailed	<i>5 p m 0/0/00</i>	Time received	<i>8 a m 0/0/00</i>
Dictated by	<i>W U D</i>	Answer to inquiry	<i>0/0/00</i>
Typed by	<i>A M P</i>	Answered	
Pages	<i>1</i>	File number	<i>GW 24365</i>

Sizzling with wim, wigor, and vitality! Sparkling with Ponce de Leon kick and cut-up! Bubbling with buoyant, booming, brisky, bacchanalian brew! Brimming with the ambrosial flavors of high Olympian

NOT THIS

It seems very strange to us that you did not receive our letter of May sixth. Other letters sent from this office on that date appear to have been regularly delivered.

We have just installed a brand-new heating plant and are, therefore, not interested in your recent letter.

We are not interested in the telephone device you offer, and it would be a waste of your time and ours for you to come in to make the demonstration you mention.

freedom! Tingling with the tasty tincture of the grand old luscious grape! Effervescing with the essence of eternal ecstasy!

But what's the use. It's all archaic—or thought to be. Nevertheless they *do* say that, just as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not impossible that is prohibited. Hence, here's how! A toast to those who would put the *probe* in prohibition! Check the list, use the enclosed stamped envelope, and expect prompt deliveries.

Telephone: 094 WETmore

Cable Address: Bacchus, N. Y.

THE BOOTLIMB SUPPLY COMPANY
711 WEST FIFTIETH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

A keg without a bung

Is a ladder without a rung.

OR

A jug without a drink

Is a chain without a link.

We may have leaves and boughs—

We may have groves and *thous*—

BUT

Bacchus is dead and done with—that is, ostensibly. You still live, however, after a manner of speaking. At least you eat, if you no longer exactly drink and are no longer merry. Still, even the best of prohibitionists cannot sometimes always tell! You bet your boots I wish you a full measure of joyful Christmas spirit. (They do say, you know, that drinking near-beer is like looking thru a keyhole with a glass eye!) However that may be, please examine the enclosed, and give us a ring—yes?

To
Address

Dr I B Dreiman
Brewsboro
New Jersey
Dictated by
Typed by
Enclosures
File Number

From *Philip Thurston*
Date *December 0, 0000*
About *New Stocks*
P T
A M P
1 Price List
GW 24365

Blarney, flattery, wheedling, on the one hand, and fawning, truckling, servility, on the other, are forms of discourtesy. No sane person cares to be approached thru such transparent methods. They are belittling and embarrassing, and always place their object at a disadvantage. The objectivity of sales composition is sometimes carried too far in all of these directions. The playing up of *you* can be made most distasteful to a prospect, and thus defeat the very end for which it is adopted. Such expressions as these, for instance, clipped from sales letters, are transparently insincere:

Your welfare is our first and foremost consideration.

Your interests are our most constant and vigilant concern.

Your expansion and advancement are our supremest endeavor.

Your satisfaction and contentment are the continuous objects of our service bureaus.

Your taste and requirements are kept superlatively to the fore in every detail of the manufacturing manipulations of our vast plants.

Again, any statement in sales-letter copy that is patently exaggerated may be interpreted by a prospect as an insult of sorts. He is very likely to feel that his gullibility has become too well known! If a letter is to be "conversation writ down," then such extravagant statements as the following are altogether out of place in sales letters. No one would think of using them in face-to-face conversation—without, perhaps, serious consequences.

A super-stalwart, ultra-powerful, supremely adjusted, and ecstasically luxurious motor conveyance.

One of the most impressively successful fictional incarnations of a great man, in dramatic literature.

You will be a better American for having partaken of this luscious breakfast nourishment, in the midst of your beaming family.

Intriguing, challenging, appalling is the motif of this phenomenal contest between St. Michael and the caveman in their fierce determination to win Anne's love.

The temptation of young writers to "play with" alliterative phrases is natural and commendable. But restraint here as elsewhere in the use of definitely stylistic devices is imperative. Used too much and too ostensibly, alliteration begets in a reader's mind the idea that he is himself being played with, that the writer is more concerned in enjoying himself than in presenting a sales or other exposition for the benefit of the prospect. Even a little alliteration may be a very dangerous thing. The same is true of word inventions. Many conservative persons are shocked and estranged by the barbarisms and improprieties that result from the strained dictional combinations to be found all too frequently in sales copy. The aim in business expression should be at the average and normal and majority prospect. Word whimsies are pleasing and entertaining as a rule only to the select few, and they should, therefore, be indulged with caution. Here are a few examples that have brought adverse comment from sources worthy of heeding:

intendability
thriftmetic
deliciousity
comfortization
radiotorial

sophomoric language
blatant billingsgate
decadent debutante
callow collegiate crooners
hoi polloi harangue

CONCISENESS

Conciseness means brevity, succinctness, pointedness. But it means none of these at the expense of clearness or courtesy or completeness. Very few business letters indeed have to be longer than one page, and most of them require less than a page. Repetitions, superfluous words, roundabout phraseology, mere talkativeness, excessive cliché expression, and the like, mean extra time and effort on the part of the dictator, the stenographer, the typist, and, most serious of all, of the one who has to read and digest the wordy message. They mean also extra wear and tear on the human nerve forces and on office equipment and supplies, and other items of overhead. To ask anybody—business person or other—to read more than is actually necessary for the correct, complete, courteous conveyance of your message is to impose upon his good nature. On the other hand, to be so brief and economical as to require him to supply missing words and phrases or to guess at intended meaning, is to be inconsiderate, if not, indeed, insulting.

The commonest mistake made by those who would condense or economize at the sacrifice of understanding, is probably that of deliberately omitting important words—subjects, especially nominal subjects, articles that definitely point out, adjectives that definitely qualify, and prepositions that definitely relate. This letter

Thank you for the account. I shall send you my check tomorrow.

I am very glad indeed that the stock record has been settled. I shall *telephone Mr. Breen of your compliance with his request.

may be written thus:

Received account. Send check tomorrow. Glad stock record settled.
Will phone Breen compliance with request.

But such stenographic or telegraphic style really saves nobody's time, and its apparent haste and "stinginess" make a very bad impression.

All forms of abbreviated copy are to be avoided in courteous and complete letter writing. The principle of conciseness is carried too far when *yours* is made to stand for *your letter*, when *res'y* is made to serve for *respectfully*, when a single initial is made to represent a given name. Such colloquial short-cutting as the

following may or may not lead to serious results, but it certainly indicates inability to use the English language accurately, or indifference about doing so:

S'rs—

In re yrs. 3rd inst would say acct.
closed as per. Mailed reg. invc.
Tues. Have ans. to yrs. of 6th
by Fri.

Yrs. t'ly,

Abbreviated expressions such as these are by no means advisable in formal business correspondence:

Address care Brownson and Company

for

Address in care of Brownson and Company

We enclose check in payment of bill

for

We enclose a check in payment of your bill

Send manuscript to R. Janes, editor *Maysville Record*

for

Send the manuscript to Mr. Roy Janes, editor of the *Maysville Record*

Office staff is moving either to Cleveland or Erie

for

The office staff is moving either to Cleveland or to Erie

It is three feet diameter measured this way

for

It is three feet in diameter measured in this way

The terms *redundancy*, *tautology*, *pleonasm*, *verbosity*, *verbiage*, *prolixity*, *diffuseness*, *circumlocution*, and *periphrasis* all mean lack of conciseness, or wordiness of one kind or another. There is nothing to be gained here by a labored differentiation among these terms. (The dictionary should be consulted.) It suffices to point out that *redundancy* may safely be regarded as a covering word for all the others, and that the simpler *wordiness* is a synonym for *redundancy*. It may be helpful briefly to define and illustrate two others:

Circumlocution means expression of thought in a roundabout manner, as *He studied engineering along the lines of dam building* for *He studied dam building*.

Tautology means the useless repetition of an idea. It is sometimes justifiable for the sake of emphasis but is used with danger even for this purpose. Note the following:

They started in on the long report

They started ^{for} the long report _____

They opened up the new office

They opened ^{for} the new office _____

He repeated his advice to the employees again

He repeated ^{for} his advice to the employees _____

The cashier he opened the window late every morning

The cashier ^{for} opened the window late every morning _____

He has great liking and skill in accounting

He has great liking ^{for} and skill in accounting _____

What use is the gage this side the boiler

Of what use is the gage ^{for} on this side of the boiler _____

He likes the Remington better than Underwood

He likes the Remington ^{for} better than he likes the Underwood _____

The work of a salesman is frequently more interesting than an executive

The work of ^{for} a salesman is frequently more interesting than that of an executive _____

But the tautological *I have given the instructions over and over again* may be used for emphasis.

Short sentences and short paragraphs are invariably indicated for business expression. They are more likely to be direct, to deliver a message with speed, to contain fewer ideas and consequently less wordiness. The reader is apt to get lost and

bewildered if he is required to read long and involved sentences, and he will have to "go back," more than once perhaps, to gather the meaning. Long sentences have a place in literature and in philosophy where abstract thought itself may be heavy and speculative and complex. But business letters require crispness, sparkle, staccato movement—all short of curtness, of course—and these qualities do not characterize the long sentence. It may be that in letters calculated to pacify and conciliate, short sentences are less suitable than long. But in most business expression the short sentence and the short paragraph are preferable, primarily because they automatically make for essential diction only and force the writer to discard useless words and phrases. The long sentence does just the opposite—it makes for grammatical looseness, for verbosity, for vagueness, and for cliché expression. Observe these two letters:

One long sentence and paragraph:

In regard to the two chairs—one rush-bottom and one upholstered—would say that we finished both of them last week but the company that supplies us with the stains for all our wooden-frame chairs failed to deliver the colors we wanted and we have been obliged to wait for them even tho we called the company up several times and also sent a special delivery letter, knowing that you wanted the chairs by the fifteenth of the month, but we beg to be permitted to say that the correct colors have at last arrived and that, no further untoward circumstances arising, we shall finish the job at once, making delivery just as soon as it has had time to dry, probably tomorrow and certainly not later than Friday.

The same message in short sentences and paragraphs:

We are sorry there has been delay in finishing the two chairs you left with us—one rush-bottom and one upholstered.

In spite of our many efforts to be strictly on time with this work, we have had great difficulty in getting the correct colors for the wooden frames. They came only yesterday but we should have had them two weeks ago.

The painting and polishing are now being done, and we shall deliver the chairs on Friday of this week—two days later than we promised them to you.

Naturally, we should have preferred to deliver them two days earlier than the date you specified. We are very much disappointed in ourselves that we could not deliver them on time—or ahead of time.

The following note is too concise, too brief, too economical of words and sentences to be of any value at all as a business communication. It is really discourteous in its brevity. Stamps and stationery are thrown away on such a message.

Your inquiry has been received and is being referred to our Cleveland office.

Note, now, the following reply, which is concise and at the same time courteous and constructive. It builds business. It wins, perhaps, a new customer or more than one, by means of the complete yet economized expression.

We are glad to have your inquiry of May third.

It has been referred to our Cleveland office for attention inasmuch as that is the headquarters for the XT models that you are interested in.

You will hear from Mr. Howard Turner, the manager, in a day or two, and he will send us a copy of his letter to you, so that we may be able to serve you in whatever negotiations follow.

The enclosed circular may help you a little in the meantime.

There are instances in which a longer expression yields emphasis and rhythm and balance to a sentence or a paragraph. A construction sometimes needs rounding out, if it is to have a proper sound or swing. This may require a degree of repetition or wordiness, as numerous examples in literature prove. But such instances are infrequent in business composition. "In the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and seventy-five" has a resounding forward march to it, but it is an extravagant way of saying "in 1775." "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish" is likewise a formidable and impressive procession of phraseology, but it is sheer profligacy of diction for saying "quick or dead." Of course, these expressions have a flow and a rhythm and a command that make them little masterpieces considered in relation to the events that evoked them and the purposes for which they were used. They do not, however, represent the language of the business letter. There you had better say

THIS

Now

Like
Soon
When
Stop
After
As to
In May
We hope
Please?

NOT THIS

At this time
At the present time
At present
Similar to
In the near future
On that occasion
Put an end to
Subsequently to
In reference to
In the month of May
We are in hope
Will you be good enough?

THIS

In 1940

We think
We desire
We suggest
We conclude
Please send
I understand
We apologize
The fact is

Because of the
Your letter of —
As you requested
They were married

I like this office

He studied finance

We are enclosing

The record was complete

We shall do our best

Having typed the report carefully

We have read your letter

This bank has vast assets

I asked him to repeat

This typewriter is six years old

I work at the National Savings
Bank

Her position was not enviable

His statement differed greatly

His estimate is undoubtedly true

We have more employees than they

Having typed the report carefully

NOT THIS

In the year of 1940

In the year nineteen hundred forty
We are of the opinion
We are desirous of getting
We would suggest
We have arrived at the conclusion
Will you please arrange to send
It is my understanding
We extend to you our apologies
In connection with this matter we
wish to call your attention to the
fact that

In view of the fact that
Your letter of recent date
In accordance with your request
They were united in bonds of holy
wedlock

This is the kind of office I like to
work in

In his studies he proceeded along
the lines of finance

We are pleased to be able to hand
you herewith

The account of his long service was
a complete one

In connection with the matter rest
assured that we shall do everything
in our power to help in the situation
Having laboriously typed the report
in a careful manner

The contents of your letter have
been carefully examined

This financial institution of bank-
ing possesses great wealth and nu-
merous resources

I had to ask him to repeat his dic-
tation back again

This old typewriter is of about six
years of age

The business institution at which
I am employed is the National
Savings Bank

Her position with the firm was in
no sense to be considered an envi-
able one

He issued quite a different sort of
statement

His estimate is undoubtedly a true
record of the case

We now have a greater number of
employees than they have

Having typed the report in a care-
ful manner

THIS

The secretary was permitted to quit

Please follow instructions

During July and August we close at five

Thank you for your check for \$751.20 which settles your account

After an examination of these accounts by the credit department, the auditor thinks that they should be dropt, and that attention should be concentrated upon the more active accounts

NOT THIS

The secretary was granted permission to discontinue his services

Will you be good enough, please, to discharge your duties according to the instructions explicitly enunciated by the foreman and elaborated in the circular

During the summer months of July and August we close down at five o'clock in the afternoon

Your check has just come to us. The amount covered by it is \$751.20. This covers your entire indebtedness to us

The credit department has examined these accounts and finds that they have been most irregular, and the chief auditor reports that he cannot understand how any firm can possibly be willing to go on with the expense of keeping such accounts on its books when there are so many live and profitable accounts to look after and keep more and more active by personal attention

The following tragic case of condensation is now a classic.* . . present of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* was sent to a magazine by a person who thought it would be a good thing for the editor to have it framed and hung above his editorial desk. Thru office routine the gift was mistaken for an original contribution. The donor received this note from the publication:

We shall be glad to accept your little skit for publication. While there is nothing very new in it, we believe our readers will enjoy its optimistic tone. Space limitations oblige us to make a few trifling cuts in it which, we think you will agree, make it much more concise and to the point, and at the same time improve its coherence and force.

Fortunately, the corrected (?) copy—shown on the next page—was rescued in time to save the editor and his magazine from the disgrace of over-conciseness.

* From the *Columbia Jester*. Used by permission of Miss Margaret Noonan, secretary to the director of King's Crown Activities

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

~~Four score and seven~~ years ago our fathers brought forth ~~on this~~
continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty and ~~dedicated to the~~
~~proposition~~ that all men are created equal.

Now we are ~~engaged in a great civil~~ war, testing whether that
nation ~~or any nation so conceived or so dedicated~~, can long endure.
We are met on a great battlefield of ~~the~~ war. We ~~have~~ come to dedi-
cate a ~~portion~~ of that field, as a final resting place of ~~those who~~
~~here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether~~
~~fitting and proper that we should do this.~~

But ~~in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot~~ consecrate,
~~we cannot~~ hallow this ground. The ~~brave~~ men, ~~living and dead~~, who
struggled here ~~have~~ dedicated it ~~far~~ above our ~~poor~~ power to add or
detract. The world will ~~little~~ note, ~~not long remember~~ what we say
here, but it can never forget ~~what they did here. It is for us the~~
living, ~~rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which~~
they who fought here have ~~advanced. It is rather~~
~~that~~ be ~~dedicated to the great task remaining before us.~~
that from these ~~dead~~ we ~~take increased devotion for that~~
cause for which they ~~gave their last full measure of devotion. We~~
~~here~~ ~~resolve that these dead, who have died in vain~~
that this nation, ~~under the~~ ~~new~~ birth of freedom and
that the government ~~of the people, by the people, and for the people~~
shall not perish, ~~from the earth.~~

CONCERN

In his *Reminiscences of Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky* D. G. Grigorovitch writes

When I had read him (Dostoevsky) my story he seemed pleased with it, but gave me no very extravagant praise; with one passage he found fault. This was how it ran: "When the organ stopped, an official threw a copper coin out of his window, which fell at the

organ-grinder's feet." "No, that's not right," said Dostoevsky, "it is much too dull: 'The copper coin fell at the organ-grinder's feet.' You should say, 'The copper coin fell clinking and hopping at the man's feet'" . . . That remark struck me as a revelation.

Dostoevsky had, in other words, made the sentence specific and concrete and picturesque, and had objected to the generic and abstract quality of the original. A more important principle for guidance in writing of all kinds, especially business letter writing, could not be enunciated, than the one illustrated in this excerpt. Abstractions and generalities make for vagueness and misunderstanding. What is more serious, they add to the burden of business letter writing by requiring more letters to be written than are necessary in a given case, in order to clarify issues. Perhaps the words *matter* and *situation* are the most troublesome generic terms in the whole field of business expression. To write that you shall look into a matter or that you will handle a situation may mean everything or nothing to the recipient of your letter. Specific, concrete, definite-to-the-case writing requires

THIS

We shall discuss those damaged fruit jars with your secretary, Mr. Ferguson, when he comes here next week.

We shall immediately make adjustment in the size of the slippers—10½ instead of 11.

The disappearance and suspected suicide of the thief B—— make it pretty certain that the \$10,000. will never be recovered.

Mr. Roberts will bring our expert, Mr. Janes, in to see you next Friday at eleven o'clock about operating that sweeper you bought last Tuesday.

NOT THIS

We shall discuss the case with the person you send to us.

Rest assured that we shall give every attention to the situation.

The circumstances are such as to make us fear the money is irrevocably lost.

Whatyoumaycallem will bring our expert Whosis in to see you some time soon about operating that thingamajig you bought last week.

The principle of concreteness is illustrated with special force and clearness in the Bible. Esau sold his birthright because he was hungry, and at the moment food seemed to him to be the most important and most valuable thing in the world. But the text specifically says "pottage of lentils." The Lord's Prayer has it, not "supply us this day with our daily food and other necessities," but "Give us this day our daily bread." When Pharaoh said to Moses, yielding equivocally to the latter's plea for deliverance

out of Egypt, "Go ye . . . only let your flocks and your herds be stayed," Moses replied definitely, specifically, picturesquely, "Not an hoof shall be left behind." It is written that the disciples of Jesus Christ were astonished when they heard Him say, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." And when Jesus saw their astonishment He said again, "Children, now hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" His use of *Children* had significance. His first statement was general and more or less abstract; His second was somewhat more specifically focused. The third time He made the idea still more concrete and picturesque, so that it would be quite clear even unto children—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

It is a good rule, in order to make thought expression crystal clear, to keep it so simple and direct that a child may understand it. The substitution of specific for generic terms will do much toward this end. The "translation" of abstract expressions into concrete ones will also help materially. General ideas and general terms are practically valueless in all business expression.

Concreteness makes for emphasis, as the foregoing exposition should have made clear. To say that Boulder Dam is the largest dam in the world is barely of passing notice. To say that Boulder Dam covers an area of 227 square miles or 145,000 acres is a very emphatic way of indicating its size. To say that Mercer is an able business man is the merest generality. To say that Mercer is at once the ablest, shrewdest, cleverest, most conscientious, and most formidable business executive in the community is clear and specific *and emphatic*.

Simple words may be quite as suggestive and vigorous and picture-building as words that run into many syllables. There is probably no better proof of this in either literature or business than the following oft-quoted excerpt from Charles Dickens' *The Chimes*:

A little shop, quite crammed and clogged with the abundance of its stock; a perfectly voracious little shop, with a maw as accommodating and full as any shark's. Cheese, butter, firewood, soap, pickles, matches, bacon, table-beer, peg-tops, sweetmeats, boys' kites, bird-seed, cold ham, birch brooms, hearth-stones, salt, vinegar, blacking, red-herrings, stationery, lard, mushroom-ketchup, staylaces, loaves of bread, shuttlecocks, eggs, and slate-pencils: everything was fish that came to the net of this greedy little shop, and all these articles were in its net. How many other kinds of petty merchandise were there,

it would be difficult to say; but balls of packthread, ropes of onions, pounds of candles, cabbage nets, and brushes, hung in bunches from the ceiling, like extraordinary fruit; while various old canisters emitting aromatic smells established the veracity of the inscription over the outer door, which informed the public that the keeper of this little shop was a licensed dealer in tea, coffee, tobacco, pepper, and snuff.

The selection of simple specific words is, then, most important for concreteness and emphasis. More important still, of course, here as in all other departments of expression, is the cultivation of specific thinking, of thinking things thru to their ultimate details. Only by such mental process will specific diction be evoked. If you are a general thinker you will be a general dictionist.

Words may be placed in expression so that they will take unto themselves concrete significance as well as emphasis. *Up to the present no word from you* is more impressive than *We have had no letter from you up to the present time*. Similarly say

THIS

Quite beyond our understanding is that last fiscal statement of yours.

Into the vault he tricked the hold-up gang.

Into the chief's office strode Thompson just as if he were to be promoted. He was fired!

NOT THIS

We cannot comprehend your last fiscal statement

He tricked the hold-up gang into the vault.

Thompson strode into the chief's office just as if he were to be promoted, whereas he was fired

The last example above illustrates not only how a situation may be concreted and emphasized by changing the natural subject-predicate-object order of a sentence. It illustrates also the impressive quality of a short, snap, definite, "unaffiliated" conclusion. The word *whereas* weakens the statement, as clause and sentence connectives (see page 152) are likely to do. Such terms as *however*, *moreover*, *also*, *therefore*, *I believe*, *it seems* should not be permitted to usurp first or last position in a sentence or a clause. These are the most emphatic, most picturesque positions, and they must not be thrown away on subordinate terms. In the arrangement of any sort of display—from picture galleries to commercial exhibits—one striking feature will usually be found at the entrance and one also at the exit. The first will lead you in; the last will leave a forceful impression upon you. Say

THIS

This merchandise is, I think, certain to be popular.

We may, however, pay you an extra dollar a week.

Fifty dollars, it seems to me, is too much for this piece.

NOT THIS

I think this merchandise is certain to be popular.

However, perhaps we may pay you an extra dollar a week.

It seems to me that fifty dollars is too much for this piece.

Climax means the arrangement of parts in an expression, long or short, so that the generic leads to the specific, the abstract to the concrete, the last unit being most emphatic of all. It is primarily a literary device or figure but it has its place in business expression as well. To change a loose sentence into a periodic sentence is to build for climax. To place the independent clause last in a complex sentence is likewise to build for climax. But in the smaller units, to arrange a series of words, phrases, and clauses in such sequence as to have the most impressive one last is to secure the emphasis of climax to your expression. Say

THIS

Your salesman was impolite, rude, and vulgar.

Inefficient is not the word for your delivery system, it is decrepit, somnolent, stagnant, defunct. Never shall I deal with your shop again, by telephone, by writing, or in person.

Suddenly, as she sat busily typing the interim report, the window flew open and she was confronted by a gangster.

NOT THIS

Your salesman was vulgar, rude, and impolite.

Your delivery service is not merely inefficient, it is defunct, stagnant, decrepit, and somnolent. I shall never deal with your shop again personally, by telephone, or by writing.

The window suddenly flew open and a gangster confronted her as she sat busily typing the interim report.

The principal thought of a sentence should not be placed in a dependent clause. If thought relationships are clearly understood in your mind, this rule will be easily observed, as will most other rules. Say

THIS

As she was quietly taking the morning dictation, she was startled by a wild and terrifying shriek.

As I was standing calmly behind the counter, a customer approached and accused me of taking her purse.

Owing to her nervousness on her first day in the office, she accidentally upset the new dictating machine.

NOT THIS

She was quietly taking the morning dictation when she was startled by a wild and terrifying shriek.

I was standing calmly behind the counter as a customer approached and accused me of taking her purse.

She was so nervous on her first day in the office that she accidentally upset the new dictating machine.

The principle of variety is especially important in business composition. If a letter bores with its repetition of diction and monotonous sentence structure, its message will be deservedly ignored. The study of synonyms will yield profitable returns by way of preventing repetition of diction. Such study will make possible both word scope and word focus in expression as well as increased power in the use of specific, concrete, and picturesque words. Too few people on looking up words in the dictionary take the time and trouble to read the synonyms and antonyms that are listed after definitions. Tho this may seem like an unnecessary thing to do when one is obliged to get a meaning or a pronunciation in haste, it nevertheless has been known to pay high dictional dividends. Too many men and women, and too many business houses, it is feared, come to be known by their vocabularies. "Here's a letter from So-and-so," said an employer to his secretary one morning, "and I'll read it to you before you open it." And he did! So-and-so's style as to diction and structure had remained the same for so many years that his correspondents knew it by heart. Say

THIS

As soon as traffic permits we shall send you those frames, but we cannot do so for at least a week.

What you say is doubtless justifiable, but our contention is that, since the time limit for all claims expired on May first, the particular adjustment you request cannot now be made.

NOT THIS

As soon as traffic enables us to do so we shall be able to send you those frames, but we shall not be able to do so for at least a week.

Your claim is doubtless justifiable, but our claim is that, since the time limit for all claims expired on May first, your particular claim cannot now be granted.

There are s
which to be

speak three or four successive sentences having exactly the same structure and beginning with exactly the same words. Yet much business composition is made deadly dull by monotony of sentence structure and repetition of initial sentence diction. The excellent letters in this book illustrate the effectiveness of variety in both of these respects. Study them with the principle of variety particularly in mind, and you will be impressed with the grace and facility that may be brought to bear in a message in which the writer has been careful to avoid boring a reader in these respects. Say

THIS

If it comes tomorrow we shall notify you at once. We shall take no action in case it is delayed. But depend upon us to use our best judgment.

Ten serious mistakes appeared in the statement, and, as a consequence, fury reigned in the office. On this semi-annual occasion there is always a disturbance.

NOT THIS

In the event of its receipt tomorrow, we shall notify you at once. In the event of its delay, we shall take no action. In any event depend upon us to use our best judgment.

There were no fewer than ten serious mistakes in the statement. There was fury in the office as a consequence. There is always a disturbance on this semi-annual occasion.

Slang is specific and concrete and picturesque. These are its principal merits, if it can be said to have merits. Whether or no, certain it is that slang should be given no place in business letters. The writer of a letter can never tell what its recipient's reaction to slang may be. This is the objective reason for refraining from its use in letter writing. The subjective reason is that the use of slang begets poverty of facility in the use of more dignified expression. Like a drug, slang may have upon the user—perhaps upon the listener—an immediate effect of exaltation, but the after effect will be stultifying and habit-forming. An occasional slang term dropped into a letter may do something by way of emphasizing or concretizing a point, but before using it, be sure of its reception, and be sure that you can resist the temptation to use two slang terms in the next letter you write.

These are a few of the important methods by which expression may be made impressive and emphatic and concrete. Any rhetoric *per se* will explain and illustrate others. The foregoing suffice for practically all purposes of letter writing—*business* letter writing. The violations indicated are only such as have been found in the examination of many hundreds of business letters. Close observation of letters reproduced in this book in relation to the contents of this section, and of the sections on clearness and correctness, is welcomed and recommended. These sections themselves may best be summarized, perhaps, by the four words: ELUCIDATE, ECONOMIZE, ELIMINATE, ENLARGE.

CLEARNESS

Your listener and your reader will always welcome your "coming to the point." They like you to use specific and concrete terms. They "gather" you with practically no effort at all when you say

dime for *coin*, *appraise* for *value*, *bulls* and *bears* for those who trade on the *prospective rise* and the *prospective fall* of the stock market. But the temptation to make expression too special or technical, when it is directed to the layman, must be resisted. If one electrical engineer writes to another, he may, of course, use technical terms freely. But if an electrical engineer is writing to one unacquainted with such terms, he must generalize his phraseology accordingly. The automobile salesman may talk about the carbureter, the differential, the fuel pump, and other mechanical parts, when he sells a car to one acquainted with these parts. But in selling to one who is not, he confines his points to ease of operation, body equipment, safety brakes, accessories, lights, and the like. Even tho the following cannot be regarded as technical language in the strict sense of the word, it is by no means sufficiently general to be used in business composition that is intended for average readers:

Our company has increased its stock of distillate and fuel-oil pumps, and now features light-duty pumps in both pressure and suction models, with capacities of from two to three g.p.h. These have inbuilt constant levels, filters, and check-valves. Heavy duty pumps and gravity or rotary burners are also sold under our trade name. These have capacities of five g.p.h. and are equipped with filters and mounting brackets.

It is important likewise that the business writer and speaker confine his language to simple and direct words rather than to large and unusual ones. The teacher who reproved pupils in this language, "Your hebetudinous recalcitrance is culpable," did not secure the order she desired: indeed, her most troublesome boy declared to his parents that she had blasphemed them and she was embarrassingly obliged to "explain herself." The youth who in these highflown terms requested an interview:

The inefficacy of epistolary expatiation in the precipitate promulgation of candidacy for occupational association is proverbial. Accusation of grandiloquence and obscurantism is incontrovertibly the consequential fructification. Under such concatenation of psychological circumstances, may I therefore sedulously solicit the gratification of my ineluctable wish-fulfilment by visitation to your official domicile?

received exactly what he deserved when the advertiser for help wrote him as follows:

Your commercial communication with its ponderosity of platitudinous and sesquipedalian verbiage, frustrates, prostrates, flabbergasts, and annihilates me. Any experimental invasion on your part of my industrial habitation will be greeted with a salutation of mutilative and assassinnative ejection. Do I achieve perspicacity?

Grammatical clearness is even more important, if possible, than dictional clearness. You may be a master of lucid and specific words—you may have hundreds of them at your command—but they will serve you *nil* unless you can put them together grammatically to the best advantage for the purposes for which you use them.

There are three general divisions of grammatical structure that should be thoroly studied by every one who is concerned with expressing himself clearly and intelligibly. They are agreement, modification, and connection. They may be listed under the heading of coherence quite as accurately as under that of clearness. Coherence means the arrangement of sentence parts so that they stand or hold together—cohere—logically and clearly; hence, coherence is a specific division of the general term clearness. Unity, conciseness, concreteness, and correctness are other divisions.

The next few pages illustrate some of the violations that occur in business composition in these three divisions. All have been taken from actual business-office writing and speaking. Correct forms are paralleled with the incorrect forms. It is needless to add that the specimens presented represent but the proverbial drop in the bucket compared with the yield from which selections have been made.

Pronominal reference and agreement are troublesome. Be careful to leave no doubt about the antecedents of pronouns. Say

THIS

He followed the accountant to a high desk and saw him place the report in a deep drawer.

or

He followed the accountant to a high desk and in his presence placed the report in a deep drawer.

NOT THIS

He followed the accountant to a high desk where he placed the report in a deep drawer.

Sometimes a change of discourse is the only method that will make pronominal reference clear. Say

THIS

He said to the manager, "You will have the report tomorrow."

or

He said to the manager, "I shall have the report tomorrow."

NOT THIS

He told his manager that he would have the report tomorrow.

Be sure that your pronouns and their antecedents agree in number. Say

THIS

The adding machine is now a necessity in business. Every up-to-date office is equipped with it.

or

Adding machines are now a necessity in business. Every up-to-date office is equipped with them.

NOT THIS

The adding machine is now a necessity in business. Every up-to-date office is equipped with them.

In general it is better to write a letter in the same pronominal number thruout. This is sometimes called the I-WE rule. If *I* is used in one sentence or paragraph, and *we* in another, to refer to the same term, expressed or understood, incoherence results. The cause usually is careless and unprepared dictation. Blocked and indented paragraphing in the same letter is the same sort of error in regard to form as the *I-and-we* violation in sequence is to subject-matter. After all, it has been pointed out on page 8 that the business letter should be objective. This means the elimination of the two first-personal pronouns as largely as possible.

Like all good rules, this one has exceptions. There are certain cases in which both *I* and *we* may quite properly be used in logical and coherent sequence. This brief example illustrates:

I have been asked to answer your letter to Mr. Blason, and I shall do my best to reply to your questions. But please be patient with me if I fail you in some of them, for my information is scattered and fragmentary.

We were organized in 1909. Our first premises consisted of two old houses on Walworth Street. We moved to our present address in 1919 . . . etc.

It is preferable not to have a pronoun refer to a noun in the possessive case. Say

THIS

John in the report of his work in the Omaha office reveals many interesting secrets.

NOT THIS

John's report of his work in the Omaha office reveals many interesting secrets.

Again, be sure that pronouns refer to words actually expressed rather than to words understood or implied. Say

THIS

Harrison is an expert in bookkeeping which he studied thruout his school course.

or

Harrison is an expert bookkeeper. He studied bookkeeping thruout his school course.

NOT THIS

Harrison is an expert bookkeeper which he studied thruout his school course.

It is better to use *which* to refer to a definite word rather than to a group of words, especially when such group contains a noun to which it may ambiguously refer. Say

THIS

Unless you deliver the goods at once we shall be ruined, for our customers will think we are going into bankruptcy.

The annual report contains inaccuracy which is the result of too much haste.

or

The annual report lacks accuracy because it was written too hastily.

Owing to his deafness he could not hear the click of the typewriters

NOT THIS

Unless you deliver the goods at once, our customers will think we are going into bankruptcy, which will ruin us.

The annual report lacks accuracy which is the result of too much haste.

He could not hear the click of the typewriters which was due to his deafness.

The pronouns *we*, *you*, *it*, *they* are frequently used indefinitely in colloquial expression, as in

We are going to have war

You turn the lever to the right.

It rained and hailed all day.

They are building higher and higher every day.

It is better, however, to avoid such impersonal or indefinite use in writing, except in certain idiomatic cases such as *it snows*, *it seems*, *it is said*. Say

THIS

Employees must be on time in this office.

My copy says (has) \$514.50, not \$514.05.

Some offices have repair men every day.

NOT THIS

You must be on time in this office.

On my copy it says \$514.50, not \$514.05.

In some offices they have repair men every day.

It is especially confusing to use *you*, *it*, or *they* twice or more in different ways or with different reference in the same sentence. Say

THIS

They look at these reports from their own points of view, praising those that show profit and condemning those that show loss.

Don't forget that both columns must be totaled before the first page is compared with the second.

If I had written that letter, it would have been better, I am certain.

If it becomes irksome, give it up entirely.

It would be clearer to me if the totals were in red.

NOT THIS

They look at these reports from their own points of view, and praise or condemn them according as they show profit or loss.

You forget that you must total both your columns before your first page is compared with your second.

If I had written that letter it is certain that it would have been better.

If it becomes irksome, it would be better to give it up entirely.

It seems to me that it would be clearer if the totals were in red.

Do not use plural subjects with singular verbs or plural verbs with singular subjects. The word *there* at the opening of a sentence tricks writers and speakers into this kind of error. This word is regarded as a weak opening and is best avoided in initial positions. Say

THIS

There are due on this account 237 books.

At the end of your letter stand a number and a sign that we do not understand.

The comfort and convenience of these hotels are proverbial among travelers.

The list of patrons who are willing to express their confidence is very long indeed.

To give the evening gown its necessary femininity, to bring forth all the grace and charm of woman's form, are the greatest problems confronting couturiers today.

A new scientific construction of reflector and lens harnesses the rays, so that they spread fan-shape below the eye level of approaching drivers.

NOT THIS

There is due on this account 237 books.

At the close of your letter stands a number and a sign that we do not understand.

The comfort and convenience of these hotels is proverbial among travelers.

The list of patrons who are willing to express their confidence are very long indeed.

To give the evening gown its necessary femininity, to bring forth all the grace and charm of woman's form, is one of the greatest problems confronting couturiers today.

A new scientific construction of reflector and lens harness the rays, so that they spread fan-shape below the eye level of approaching drivers.

Dangling construction—participial, gerund, infinitive—should be carefully guarded against in the cause of clearness. Probably the greatest amount of vagueness and ambiguity, and indefiniteness in general, is caused by participles and gerunds and infinitives that seem to modify what they do not, or fail to modify clearly what they should. In the first place see to it that each of these troublesome forms is definitely and closely linked with the word or words to which it belongs. Then see to it that it is placed as closely as possible to such word or words. Note in the following that the correct form may eliminate the participle altogether; this is probably the better procedure in the vast majority of cases. A noun or a pronoun may be supplied for the participle to modify. Or a change of position may place the participle in closer modification of the word it is intended to modify. Say

THIS

When she had finished her typing,
her employer excused her for the
day.

or

Having finished her typing, she was
excused for the day by her em-
ployer.

When my boy was dismissed from
college, I sent him to business
school.

or

Having been dismissed from col-
lege, my boy was sent to business
school by me.

He was demoted as result of care-
lessness.

The complication of this transac-
tion causes us much confusion.

Stepping on a discarded razor blade
as she entered the office this morn-
ing, the secretary cut her foot.

Inasmuch as our terms request
monthly settlement, perhaps you
would like to defer further pur-
chases until payment has been
made.

NOT THIS

Having finished her typing, her em-
ployer excused her for the day.

Having been dismissed from college
I sent my boy to business school.

He was demoted caused by his care-
lessness.

This transaction is complicated,
causing us much confusion.

The secretary cut her foot this
morning stepping as she entered the
office on a discarded razor blade.

or

The secretary cut her foot this
morning stepping on a discarded
razor blade while entering the office.

Considering that our terms request
monthly settlements, it seems that
perhaps you would like to defer
further purchases until payment
has been made.

When a gerund phrase or an infinitive phrase is used at the opening of a sentence it must be related definitely to the proper word or sentence part, usually the subject. Say

THIS

On depositing my check I had my endorsement questioned.

or

When I deposited my check my endorsement was questioned.

To type neatly and accurately a typist must have a quiet office to work in.

or

If typing is to be neatly and accurately done, a typist must have a quiet office to work in.

NOT THIS

On depositing my check my endorsement was questioned.

To type neatly and accurately the office must be quiet.

But in *To speak scientifically, the out-air flow and the in-air flow should be of the same velocity and All things considered, the cash receipts were satisfactory*, the introductory phrase is detached and independent. It bears upon the following clause as a unit rather than upon any particular term in it.

Care should be exercised to see that the understood subject of a dependent clause does not "clash" in meaning with the subject of the independent clause. Such omission frequently causes incoherence or ridiculous inference. Dependent clauses having subject and predicate understood are sometimes called elliptical clauses. Say

THIS

While (I was) looking thru your mail I was attracted by a red envelope.

When he was a beginner in accounting, his employer said he would succeed.

You should not attempt to operate that machine until it is thoroly greased.

NOT THIS

While looking thru your mail, a red envelope attracted me.

When a beginner in accounting, his employer said he would succeed.

You should not attempt to operate that machine until thoroly greased.

See to it that modifying words, phrases, and clauses are placed as closely as possible to the words that they modify. Careless placement of modifiers may frequently lead to such ambiguity as is illustrated in these sentences all of which *may* be correct, tho those in the right-hand column are probably incorrect.

We shall make all appointments by mail after we receive your O. K.

We shall make all appointments after we receive your O. K. by mail.

Please mention this letter and tell us by telegraph how you wish us to handle the order.

Please mention this letter and tell us how you wish us to handle the order by telegraph.

Let me thank you thru Mr. Bronson for your order.

Let me thank you for your order thru Mr. Bronson.

Do you think you'll ever get that addition right!

Do you ever think you'll get that addition right!

At your convenience will you please let me know how we shall proceed?

Will you please let me know how we shall proceed at your convenience?

Please return the ribbon by mail after you have made your selection.

Please return the ribbon after you have made your selection by mail.

He is probably the most agreeable manager we ever had.

He is the most agreeable manager we probably ever had.

There are three equally easy ways of computing the amounts.

There are three ways of computing the amounts which are equally easy.

The office worker who shirks is in nine cases out of ten indifferent about promotion.

The office worker who shirks in nine cases out of ten is indifferent about promotion.

or
The office worker, who in nine cases out of ten shirks, is indifferent about promotion.

He pulled the ribbon on which there was a flaw (or with a flaw in it) to the end of the spool.

He pulled the ribbon to the end of the spool on which there was a flaw.

The placement of a modifier in such a way between two different parts of a sentence that it may grammatically modify either member (as in most of the sentences above) is known as "squinting construction." The meaning in the mind of the speaker must in such cases be the deciding factor as to word or phrase placement. In such constructions as the following, however, there can be no doubt. Say

THIS

He made only ten mistakes!

He asks merely a dollar increase.

NOT THIS

He only made ten mistakes!

He merely asks a dollar increase

It is better not to use the split infinitive, that is, not to insert a word or words between *to* and the verb that follows it. Say

THIS

I want you to supervise this personally.

I told him to prepare the bill as quickly as possible.

NOT THIS

I want you to personally supervise this.

I told him to as quickly as possible prepare the bill.

In addition to errors in agreement and in modification, the writer of business composition should observe the following major rules of connection. Business letter writers frequently err in connecting thoughts naturally and logically. One of the most common mistakes is that of using *because* for *that* in introducing noun clauses following the word *reason*. Say

THIS

The reason for the bank failure was that the cashier absconded.

The fact that she was promoted (or Her promotion) to the upper office is no reason why her new typewriter should be "promoted" too!

NOT THIS

The reason for the bank failure was because the cashier absconded.

Because she was promoted to the upper office is no reason why her new typewriter should be "promoted" too!

When and *where* should not be used in explanations to introduce attribute compliments (predicate nouns). Say

THIS

Itemizing a bill is the listing of each particular article of purchase.

Buying on credit is an arrangement by which a buyer, as result of his character and his capacity to pay, is privileged to take goods and pay for them later.

NOT THIS

Itemizing a bill is where you list each particular article of purchase.

Buying on credit is when a buyer, as result of his character and his capacity to pay, is privileged to take goods and pay for them later.

All the parts of a sentence should be connected logically, so that its meaning will be quite obviously clear on first reading. Say

THIS

Nothing annoys me more than a person's typing with his two first fingers only.

NOT THIS

Nothing annoys me more than to see a typist use his two first fingers only in typing.

It is neither the seeing nor the person that is annoying; it is the method of operating the machine. Say

THIS

You must choose between making the delivery today and making it next Tuesday.

NOT THIS

You must choose between making the delivery today or making it next Tuesday.

The *or* really repeats *choose*, and *between* repeats both. Again, say

THIS

Of all the candidates whose names were submitted, I should select this one as the most promising secretary.

NOT THIS

Of all the names submitted I should select this one as the most promising secretary.

In the wrong sentence *one* refers to a name not to a person or a candidate. Say

THIS

Will you please tell us how your customer will dispose of this?

NOT THIS

Will you please inform us what will be the disposition of your customer in view of this situation?

Take one pill every night and you'll soon feel better.

Take one pill this very night, and one every other night, and you'll soon feel better.

Twelve attended—eight gentlemen and four ladies two of whom were wives of two of the gentlemen present.

Twelve attended—eight gentlemen and four ladies two of whom were wives of the gentlemen present.

Meanwhile, Jones, Smith, Miss Brown, and a bellboy were held in the office until the account was straightened out.

Meanwhile, Jones, Smith, a bellboy, and Miss Brown were held in the office until the account was straightened out.

There is no desk where you can work except in the hall.

There is no desk where you can work only in the hall.

or

There is no place for you to work except at the desk in the hall.

It is naturally impossible to illustrate all the various types of confused and bungled relationships that are to be found in sentence structure. And there is no panacea for such "ailing English" as that illustrated just above. The best advice that can be given is that on page 128, namely, keep your sentences short, and thus, less liable to error. Err on the side of confining every sentence to the simplest possible form, to a single subject and predicate, until you are sure you can write complex and compound sentences that are coherent and logical in their internal relationships.

Correlative conjunctions should be placed as closely as possible to the words, phrases, or clauses that they connect. Whenever possible, they should be placed immediately before the words, phrases, or clauses that they connect. Say

THIS

Mary likes neither typing nor accounting.

The firm has taken the prize not only for its product but also for its letters.

NOT THIS

Mary neither likes typing nor accounting.

The firm has not only taken the prize for its product but also for its letters.

Be especially careful not to connect a relative clause with the independent clause to which it belongs, by a coordinate conjunction in addition to the correct *who*, *which*, or *that*. Say

THIS

He finished taking inventory which was the most complete the company had ever had.

or
He finished taking inventory—the most complete the company had ever had.

Every one likes the new executive who is most agreeable.

or
The new executive who is most agreeable is liked by every one.

NOT THIS

He finished taking inventory and which was the most complete the company had ever had.

Every one likes the new executive and who is most agreeable.

Do not connect dissimilar constructions—constructions that are not uniform—by means of coordinate conjunctions. Say

THIS

He said that he wished to be promoted not to the savings department but to the trust department.

or
He said that he wished to be promoted to the trust rather than to the savings department.

Hoping to give a higher degree of satisfaction and to increase market demands, we have recently expanded our plants by fifty-fold.

or
Hoping that we might give a higher degree of satisfaction and that we might increase market demands, we have recently expanded our plants by fifty-fold.

NOT THIS

He said that he wished to be promoted not to the savings department but where estates are cared for.

Hoping that we might give a higher degree of satisfaction and to increase market demands, we have recently expanded our plants fifty-fold.

It makes for clearness and coherence if the same subject is retained in the different clauses of a sentence, as well as the same verbal forms. This rule cannot always be observed, and perfectly good sentences may be constructed in violation of it. But in most cases it may easily be followed and always to expressional advantage. Say

THIS

We finished the dictation promptly and soon mailed the letters.

First, know what you want to say; then, outline your letter.

NOT THIS

We finished the dictation promptly and the letters were soon mailed.

First, know what you want to say; then an outline of your letter should be made.

It is most important that you use coordinate conjunctions to connect sentence parts that are alike and equal—words of the same function and same part of speech, phrases with phrases of the same kind, clauses with clauses of the same kind. Say

THIS

Tom started looking at the clock and nodding toward the pile of work on his desk.

She was able and industrious, and held the record in typing.

Your letter leaves us uninformed as to the shipment and as to the truck.

The convention gave me many good business ideas which I had never heard of before but which, I think, are workable.

He wants an efficient auditor, one who is always on the job and who knows the tax laws thoroly.

NOT THIS

Tom started looking at the clock and to nod toward the pile of work on his desk.

She was able, industrious, and held the record in typing.

Your letter leaves us uninformed as to the shipment and what shall be done about the truck.

The convention gave me many good business ideas which I had never heard of before but I think they are workable.

He wants an efficient auditor, one who is always on the job and knowing the tax laws thoroly.

Avoid the excessive use of *and*. Too much dependence is placed upon this small word, especially in letter writing where one may "run on and on" with its assistance. Frequently it may be omitted with the result that a closer relationship of parts is established. Say

THIS

Turning to take my pad I knocked the machine over.

Since no number is used twice there can be no confusion.

His ability in organization is so shrewd that a single bit of waste annoys him.

NOT THIS

I turned to take my pad and as I did, so knocked the machine over.

No number is used twice and there can thus be no confusion.

He has shrewd ability in organization and a single bit of waste annoys him.

The conjunction *but* is also overused. Barrett Wendell in his *English Composition* long ago attributed the overuse or the wrong use of *and* and *but* to the fact that people do not as a rule think with precision. "Thought," he says, "which lacks precision commonly presents itself in experience as either a simple addition to what precedes or an abrupt breaking off. In the former case, one instinctively writes *and*; in the latter, *but*. . . Use no more *ands* and *buts* than you can help." Say

THIS

Above all keep your integrity in business dealings.

Tho we shall pay dearly for it in the end, we won the bid.

NOT THIS

But above all keep your integrity in business dealings.

We won the bid but we shall pay dearly for it in the end.

A sentence-connective is a conjunction or a short conjunctive phrase having little or no meaning of its own but showing a connection or relationship between the sentence in which it occurs and a preceding sentence. *However, inasmuch, nevertheless, whereas, at length, secondly, thirdly, therefore, on the contrary, in fact, in like manner, at last* are a few of the most commonly used sentence-connectives. They may also connect clauses. *He promised, however, to take charge of the office* illustrates the use of *however* to relate or connect this sentence to a preceding one. *However much he promised he never kept his word* illustrates the use of *however* as a pure adverb. *He is ill; however, he will appear* illustrates its use as a clause-connective.

It is well to depend as little as possible upon sentence-connectives. Your thought should be so clearly formed in your own mind and your sentence expression of it so clearly set down, that no such props as sentence-connectives will be necessary to make either clear and sequential. Dictators and other speakers sometimes "stall" upon such words and phrases while they make up their minds what to say next. They have the erroneous idea that such connectives give their expression dignity and formality. But this is not true. The best writers and speakers depend upon them as little as possible.

A college professor once gave a lecture on the desirability of using sentence-connectives for the purpose of knitting expression closely and coherently together. The weekly themes that followed his lecture showed that his students had taken him somewhat too literally, and he had to "unteach" them by delivering

another lecture on *Howevering, Moreovering, and Neverthelessing to Excess*. The following is taken from a circular letter written by an economist (perhaps one of the professor's old students!). Note that it says nothing whatever more important than *yes and no*, and that it does so by the overuse of high-sounding connectives turned bromide:

Let me add, therefore, that in the long run no one can prophesy accurately. It may, however, happen that business will show spurts here and there but in the main reveal no general upturn for the better. As a matter of fact such spurts may be feverish, and hence, dangerous to a community at large. Nevertheless, any advance in business pace should always be welcomed; moreover, there is always the chance that such local spurts may spread a wholesome contagion.

Lack of clearness is sometimes due to bad dictation, whether the dictation be direct, or indirect by cylinder. Words may be mispronounced or slurred; enunciation may be poor; speech may be generally mumbled and muffled and inexact; voice or its reproduction may be weak or faint; the dictator may divide his attention with a cigar or the telephone or some other disconcerting activity. Words that require nice distinctions in pronunciation, such as *Miss* and *Mrs.*, *an* and *and*, *of* and *off*, should be enunciated with special care. Dictation that is too rapid has been known to get such dictional anomalies as these into the mails: *wanna* for *want to*, *wanaaf* for *one half*, *grade-ee* for *grade D*, *gray day* for *grade A*, *this guy's the limit* for *the sky's the limit* (in a credit letter!).

The dictator should talk directly into the tube. If, by any inattention whatever, he allows the tube to be moved and thus talks over or below it, his dictation will not be clear to the transcriber. It is highly probable that bad dictation, direct or indirect, is responsible for most of the bad business letters that are in the mails at the moment. And it is equally probable that bad dictation is the result of bad discipline and bad organization on the part of those who dictate.

In the first place dictation should be done at regular periods, at a definitely allotted time of the day, preferably in the forenoon. It should be regarded as a serious and formal task, to be ordered and planned as all other important tasks are. It is fatal to good letter writing, as a rule, for a dictator to "give a letter" now and then thruout the day, at odd moments, just as he happens to think of it. What is worse, this haphazard method of correspondence begets a disrespectful mental attitude toward dictating. It comes

to be regarded as an odd-moment bit of routine and, as a consequence, letters become routine letters.

The dictator should know, when he begins to dictate, just what he wants to say all the way to the end of the letter. He should have his letter planned coherently from beginning to end. Otherwise he will be most likely to dictate detached paragraphs and sentences, and his letter will be accordingly difficult to grasp accurately. In the event of his having many letters to write, he should make up his mind which he wants to dictate first, which last, which require least thought, which most. His dictation period should, as said above, be planned and organized, as well as his individual letters.

It should be needless to add (but is it?) that the dictator of letters should not smoke, chew gum, engage in side conversations, or permit interruptions of any kind while he is dictating. Even more important if possible, he should never convey to the stenographer any impression of hurry or of impatience. Indeed, it is the stenographer who may be forgiven for impatience just in proportion as she has to suffer such remarks as, "Pardon me, just cross that out," "Better change that to read . . .," "Let me see, where were we?" "No, revise that to read . . .," "No, that won't do. Put it this way"—all so characteristic of spur-of-the-moment dictation and its subsequent muddled letter composition.

CORRECTNESS

The preceding section on coherence and clearness contains many examples of incorrect English. They have to do chiefly, however, with structural errors, mistakes in the relationship of parts. The content of this section deals rather with slips and inaccuracies in the use of words and phrases. Most of the terms listed below are taken from correspondence manuals issued by many different kinds of business houses. They represent the materials that are common to such manuals. They constitute what correspondence supervisors regard as the most important instructional matter in these manuals because employees are found weakest in this particular department of English. In order to impress upon employees the seriousness of errors in the use of words and phrases, employers in more than one establishment have emphasized by placards and circulars the fact that loose and slovenly and inaccurate expression is one of the most damaging forms of dishonesty in business. And they are more than right, for the letter that

deliberately or unconsciously says what it does not mean or seems to mean what it does not say, misrepresents the writer personally as well as the business for which he writes.

Extra words, involved phraseology, conventional expressions, vague and ambiguous terms, all cost money. And if there can be no higher motive of appeal for their avoidance, then this material one should be convincingly presented to employees. If they cannot be persuaded to avoid down-at-heel English by such personal appeals as these, namely, that it disgraces them, that it evinces their mental inertia, that it reveals them as robots talking without the faintest impulse of ideas, then their employers must teach convincingly about the dollars-and-cents values of clear, correct, straightforward English.

Very few business letters cost a firm less than thirty-five cents each. Usually the cost is fifty cents each. In the case of elaborate sales letters with accompanying display letterheads and other special printed appeals enclosed, the cost mounts to more than a dollar a letter. Multiply this by the number written and mailed—many thousands as a rule—and the total expense becomes formidable. Every member of the letter-writing forces of a company should be made to see *and to feel* this financial responsibility.

The direct costs include mailing—stamps, stamp-affixing machines, sealing and folding machines; stationery of many different styles—letterheads, envelopes, printing, sheets for carbon copies, carbon sheets themselves; salaries—dictators, stenographers, typists, file clerks, mail men; equipment and supplies—desks, typewriters, ribbons, stationery devices (clips, punchers, and so forth), filing cases with supplies, dictating machines, and cleaning and repair charges for all machines used. The indirect costs include rent, light, heat, taxes, insurance, telephone, salaries of all connected with correspondence, wasted and lost time of stenographers and others, spoiled stationery and stamps. And the end is not yet. It is the wise policy of many business houses to keep this list of direct and indirect correspondence costs clearly before all employees concerned, by means of large placards or of cards under desk glasses.

To write *effect* when you mean *affect* is even worse than to advertise a breakfast food by means of a picture of a boy and a girl driving a car. To write *take* when you mean *bring* may beget

as serious a reaction as to advertise refrigerators by means of a picture of an old gentleman holding a telephone receiver to his ear. To write *continual* when you mean *continuous* may deservedly result as dangerously as to advertise automobiles by means of a picture of young parents weighing their baby. Such incoherent and incorrect advertising illustrations as those here mentioned can be found by the dozens in the pages of newspapers and magazines. They are no more common to advertising copy, however, than crude, bungled, and muddled English is to business letters. Both kinds of incoherence manifest a careless regard, to say the least, for the good opinion of that composite and pitifully confused character known as Mr. John Prospect.

The following is taken from a circular letter that is presented to guests on their arrival at a large city hotel:

We welcome from our guests complaints, and the management will deem it a favor by reporting any discourtesies on the part of our employees. All complaints must be signed and sent direct to

The manager of a shop assured a customer that a certain disputed delivery *had* been made. The customer replied, "The delivery you mention must be a pigment of your imagination." •The employees of a large industrial plant reported in their house organ that their company team had won a "tentacle victory" in one of a series of games played against the team of a neighboring company. It pointed out that only the "supreme self-conference" of their fullback had "wrought the commutation." Mrs. Malaprop is *persona non grata* in business, however welcome she may be in the drawing-room or behind the footlights.

Each individual house has or develops "pet" errors of its own. These cannot all be included here, but following are more than four hundred terms that are, to say the least, troublesome: *

above should not be used in the sense of *more than*. Say *I have more than ten dollars in my pocket*; not *above ten dollars*. *The foregoing or the preceding statement* is preferable to *the above statement*. In general it should be used as an adverb rather than as an adjective.

accept, except. The former is a verb meaning to receive; the latter may be a verb, meaning to exclude, but it is more commonly used as a preposition. *He accepts his demotion heroically. This name should be excepted from the list. Everybody is present except the treasurer.*

* See *Don't Say It* by the same author, published by Funk and Wagnalls Company, for extended alphabetical treatment of word and phrase usage

THE YEA AND THE NAY



access and **excess** should not be confused. The former means admittance; the latter, too much.

ad. should not be used for *advertisement*.

adjectives like *awful, colossal, elegant, gorgeous, grand, lovely, marvelous, stupendous, wonderful*, should be used sparingly in business. Less extravagant adjectives are desirable, and are usually more impressive. Do not use *most* before such as those above listed.

admission, admittance. The former means the right of admittance; the latter the act of allowing to enter. *He was denied admission to membership. He gained admittance to the field after much difficulty.*

advise is greatly overused. Avoid it for *tell, inform, say*. It is more properly used in legal papers than in commercial letters.

affect, effect. The former is always a verb meaning to modify or influence. The latter as a verb means to accomplish, to bring about; as a noun, outcome, result. *The stock market affects our business. We expect to effect a change of policy very soon. The stock market has a bad effect on our business. Men effect price changes that affect business conditions.*

after should not be used in the sense of carrying on *I am listing the invoices*, not *I am after listing the invoices*. This word is redundant used before the perfect participle. Say *After subtracting*; not *After having subtracted*.

again should not be used after a word containing a syllable that means the same thing. Do not say *repeat again*, for *re* means again.

against should not be used as a verb. Say *I am opposed to him*; not *I am against him*.

aggravate means to intensify, to add to, to make worse. Do not use it in the sense of *annoy, provoke, vex*. *The bad appearance of the letter aggravated his already ruffled temper.*

ain't is sometimes made a vulgar substitute for *isn't, hasn't, haven't*, and still other verbal contractions. There is really no such word. Do not use it.

all in connection with such expressions as *the more, the farther—all the more, all the farther*—should be avoided. Say, rather, *farthermore* or *as far again* or *in addition*.

all-around is not permissible. Use *all-round*.

allow should not be used for *admit, confess, guess, say, think*. It means *permit*.

all right. These words will probably sometime become merged into one—*alright*. But the "merger" has not yet taken place! So you must spell them as two independent words—*all right*—as *almost, already, altogether* once were spelled.

all the should not be used for *as far as*. Used before an adverb these words mean *by so much* or *just such an amount*. Say *This is as far*

as I could add; not This is all the farther I could add. We shall get done all the sooner for your help is correct.

almost, most, mostly. *Almost* is an adverb meaning not quite or less than or nearly all. *Most* is the superlative of the adjective *much* and must not be used as an adverb. *Mostly* is an adverb meaning chiefly, for the most part. *I am almost done. Most letters are written too hurriedly. The pamphlets in the lower drawer are mostly worthless.*

alongside should not be followed by *of*. It means *by the side of* or *near to*.

alternative, choice. The former refers to two only; the latter to two or more. *The alternative of dismissal is work. His choice of the many opportunities before him has proved his wisdom.*

amateur, novice. An amateur is one who engages in an art or a sport, not professionally but for the love of it. A novice is one unskilled and inexperienced, and still on probation; a tyro. *This must be typed by an expert, not by an amateur, certainly not by a novice.*

amount, number, quantity. These words are frequently loosely used. *Amount* refers to totality; *number* to collective units; *quantity* to estimated mass. You have a *quantity* of molasses, a *number* of apples, and a certain *amount* of money in the bank after a sale.

and should not be used before *etc.* *Etc.—et cetera*—means *and so forth*, *et* being the equivalent of *and*. In straight copy *etc.* is preferably written out; in listings, *etc.* may always be used.

annoy means to trouble in a small way. Do not confuse with *aggravate* and *exasperate*. *His smoking while he dictates annoys the stenographer.*

another is used with *one*—*one another*—to denote succession or consecutiveness of relationship. Custom may, however, justify its use interchangeably with *each other*. Do not use a plural verb or a plural reference with *one another*. *The members of the diplomatic corps followed one another in to dinner.*

anticipate is overused in business letters. Don't anticipate a reply or a date. You await or expect an answer and look forward to an appointment. You anticipate a planned event or pleasure.

anxious is used too loosely for *desire*, *eager*, *wish*. Say *He is eager to be promoted* and *He desires or wishes to work in the commercial field.*

any should not be used with superlatives. Do not say *best of any*. Used in comparative statements, this word requires *other* to follow it. Do not say *This paper is better than any I have used*. Do not use with *place* for *anywhere*. Say *This paper is better than any other I have ever used*; not *This paper is the best of any I have ever used*. Say *I cannot find it anywhere*; not *I cannot find it any place*.

anywheres is incorrect for *anywhere*.

appear, seem. *Appear* refers to that which manifests itself to the senses. *Seem* applies to that which is manifested to the mind on reflection.

Seem gives or creates the impression of being. A man may seem honest, but he cannot appear so.

appreciate should not be used in the sense of *know* or *understand*. Do not use an adverb of degree with this word, such as *very* or *much*. The word itself means to value highly or to estimate correctly. Say *I sympathize with your feelings regarding your demotion*, not, *I appreciate your feelings regarding your demotion*.

around, about. The first of these words means to encircle, and refers usually to space. *He walked around the block*. *About*, as a preposition, means *approximately* or *in the neighborhood of*; as an adverb, it means *astir*, *to and fro*, *moving around*. *It is about two o'clock*. *He has about two hundred dollars in his pocket*. *He strolled about (or around)*. Do not say *It is around two o'clock* or *He has around two hundred dollars in his pocket*.

as should not be used for *that* or *whether* to introduce substantive clauses. *I do not know that he is dictating* or *whether he is dictating* is correct, not *I do not know as he is dictating*. Do not use *as* for *like*. Say *He types like me* or *He types as I do*, not *He types as me* or *He types like I do*. *As* and *as* are correlative in affirmative statements, *so* and *as* in negative statements. Say *This job is as remunerative as that* and *This job is not so remunerative as that*. Do not "lean" upon *as*, that is, do not use it to excess for *because* or *since* or *inasmuch*. *I should like you to take dictation now; I have many letters to write* is in most cases better than *I should like you to take dictation now as I have many letters to write*.

at should not be used to conclude a "statement of location." *Where are you?* Not *Where are you at?* It should not be used in a verbal sense for *doing*. *What are you doing?* Not *What are you at?* Do not use *at* superfluously with *about*. Say *He came about noon*, not *He came at about noon* (see *where*).

average, ordinary. *Average* is the mean of several, arrived at by numerical calculation; *ordinary* is usual or common in occurrence. *The average of his weekly wage for the past five years has been fifty dollars*. *The ordinary affairs of the office held no interest for him*.

averse, adverse. These two words denote opposition, unfavorableness. *Averse* refers to feeling or inclination; *adverse* to circumstances or opinions. *The man is averse to exercising before breakfast, especially under adverse conditions*. *Averse* is accented on the second syllable; *adverse* on the first.

awful really means full of awe. Do not use it in the sense of *very*. This applies likewise to *awfully*.

bad, badly. The former is an adjective; the latter, an adverb. You should therefore say *I feel bad (ill)* rather than *I feel badly*. If you say *He did his work very badly*, then *badly* is correctly used as an adverb modifying *did*.

balance, remainder. The former means equality between debit and credit totals of an account or the difference between such totals—excess on either side. *Remainder* is the part left after something has been taken away. *My bank statement shows a balance to my credit, and I shall therefore stay at the resort the remainder of the season.* *Rest* is used interchangeably with *remainder*.

be back is preferably not used in the sense of *return*.

beg means to ask alms, to entreat, to solicit, to request persistently and emotionally. Do not *beg to inform* or *advise* or *state* in reply to a letter.

behind is preferable to the phrase *in back of*. *My keys fell behind* (not *in back of*) *the cabinet*.

beside, besides. The former is a preposition meaning *close to, by the side of*. The latter is, strictly speaking, an adverb or an adverbial conjunction meaning *in addition to*. *Will you sit beside me? I have two checks and a draft besides.*

best, most, greatest, largest, and other superlatives, should not be used loosely or too frequently. Do not use *best* for *better*. Say *better of two* and *best of three*.

between, among. *Between* properly refers to two only—*between you and me*; *among*, to more than two—*among the three of us*. But this strictly correct usage is frequently violated in present-day writing.

bid is an offer based upon an estimate. *After weighing very carefully the costs of labor and materials, the contractor placed a bid of ten thousand dollars on the job.*

bind, in business use, means held or contracted for by means of legal right. *My contract binds me to this position for another year.*

blame is to be avoided in reference to persons. Blame the weather or the market but do not blame Brown or Jones. Do not use *on* after *blame*. Say *Blame the machine*; not *Blame it on the machine*.

brainy is slang or colloquialism for *clever, intelligent, shrewd*. Better avoid its use.

bring, take, fetch. *Bring* means to convey, carry, or conduct *to* the place where the speaker is. *Take* means to convey, carry, or conduct *from* the place where the speaker is. *Fetch* equals *bring* plus *take*; that is, to go from the place where the speaker is to another place, and to convey, carry, or conduct from this other place to the place where the speaker is. *"Take this book from my desk to the cashier," said the manager, "and bring me a blank check."* *"Take this container from my desk," said the manager, "and bring me some clips from the storeroom;"* that is, *"Fetch me some clips from the storeroom," said the manager, handing the clerk a container.*

bunch is a word much overused and abused. It is properly used in reference to keys or flowers, but not in reference to a company or group of any kind. Do not say *a bunch of fellows*.

but meaning *only* should not be preceded by *hardly, only, rarely, scarcely*, or any other word of negative significance. Say *I have but one*

and *I take but one*; not *I haven't but one* and *I rarely take but one*. Do not misuse *but* with *that* and *what*. Say *I do not doubt that he is efficient*; not *I do not doubt but that or what he is efficient*. Use *but* carefully after *can*. In *He can but make it right* the meaning is that there is nothing else for him to do but to make it right. In *He cannot but make it right* the meaning is that he cannot help making it right. *But* meaning *except* and *but* in its common use as an adversative conjunction offer few if any difficulties.

calculate means to compute and estimate by more or less complicated devices. *They calculate the cost of the letters of an average week to be \$218 18.*

can, may. *Can* means ability. *May* means permission. *Can we ship this by express?* is wrong because what we really wish is permission. Correct uses of these words are *May we ship this by express?* and *We can ship these on Thursday.*

can't but should not be mistaken for *can but*, in which *but* means *only*. Say *I can but go*, not *I can't but go* (see *but* and *only*).

can't seem and **couldn't seem** are to be avoided in the sense of *seems* or *seemed unable*. Say *He doesn't seem able to learn multiplication*, not *He can't seem to learn multiplication*.

capacity, ability. *Capacity* is receptive or containing power; *ability* means power of achieving. *He has the capacity to learn salesmanship and the ability to work hard.*

cause implies a noun or a noun clause to follow as a rule. It should not be followed by *on account of*. Say *The cause of the misunderstanding was his failure to pay or that he did not pay*; not *The cause of the misunderstanding was on account of his failure to pay*.

caused by may not be substituted for *because of* or *on account of*. Say *He was absent because of (or on account of) illness*, not *He was absent caused by illness*. You may, of course, say *His absence was caused by illness*.

claim should not be used for *insist, assert, maintain*. It means to *demand as right*. Say *I claim the fifty dollars that are due me*; not *I claim that he is an efficient clerk*.

combine is a verb and should not be used as a noun in the sense of *trust, monopoly, corporation, or company*. *The companies formed a trust* (not a *combine*).

commodity, goods, merchandise. The first is any product or part thereof that is movable and valuable, and thus made ready for marketing. *Goods*—always plural—are easily transferable articles that may or may not be offered for sale. *Merchandise* is goods prepared and offered for sale. *A new commodity has just been made ready for the counter. The goods were shipped yesterday. The new merchandise is selling rapidly.*

commonly refers to the greater part of a class generally; **universally** refers to all of a class. *His statements are commonly regarded as superior in both appearance and accuracy. Her work is universally approved.*

compare, contrast. The former means to point out both likenesses and differences; the latter, differences only. You compare your results of a problem with another's; that is, you learn in what respects they are like and in what respects unlike. You contrast a poor business letter with a good one; that is, you point out the differences between the two.

complected is a vulgar substitute for *complexioned* or of a *complexion*. There is really no such word as *complected* in relation to the appearance of the skin. Use *complexioned* sparingly.

complement, compliment. The former is the act of completing; the latter is praise or commendation or congratulation. *The complement of our Easter stock has just arrived. He received a compliment from the president of the company.*

consul, council, counsel. *Consul* is an official representing a government in foreign parts. *Council* is a meeting or conference or consultation. *Counsel* is advice; an adviser, usually in legal matters. *At the international commercial council, the British consul at Philadelphia gave us some very sound counsel.*

contemptible means deserving of scorn or disgust; **contemptuous** means evincing scorn or disgust. Say *He is a contemptible foreman and his employees are justifiably contemptuous in their attitude toward him.*

continual means intermittent, at frequent intervals; **continuous** means without interruption. Continuous work is work done on a stretch. Continual work goes on in time but with the natural and required interruption. *Continual* refers to time only; *continuous* to space also, as, *a continuous expanse.*

correct, proper. The former is preferably used to refer to dimensions, measurements, and the like; the latter, to refer to such conventionalities as dress, etiquette, social usage. Some business houses insist upon the distinction.

correspond followed by *to*, means to match or equal; followed by *with*, means exchange in letter writing—corresponding with a friend regularly.

credible means believable; **credulous** means easily believing, gullible, easily imposed upon; **creditable** means sound, laudable, praiseworthy.

criticism means favorable or unfavorable comment—judgment or evaluation. Do not use it in the sense of censure only.

custom means the frequenting of a certain place of business, as shop, mill, hotel. *Custom-made* means made to order in distinction from ready-made. *Custom* also means voluntary repetition of an act by a person or a group of persons under the same circumstances, for the same reasons, and from the same underlying causes. *Habit* is the tendency to repeat a certain act without volition on the part of the doer. It is individual, as a rule, whereas custom is collective. There are house customs to be observed; there are habits of employers that had better be.

customer, client, patron. A customer repeatedly makes purchases. A client is dependent upon a certain service. A patron is an institutional customer, i.e., a railroad or a theater patron. *Client* is used exclusively in law. Both *client* and *customer* are used in connection with banks, the latter being preferred.

d (see *nd* and *rd*).

data is plural and requires a plural verb, as also do *errata*, *phenomena*, and *strata*. It is pronounced *dāta*.

date, used in the sense of appointment, is slang. *Dated* and *dating*, in the same sense, are likewise slang. But *dated* is correctly used to indicate that something is out of date.

deal is too colloquially used for *transaction*, *negotiation*, *agreement*, *contract*, in business English.

deal of refers to amount or quantity (see *many*). *He has a great deal of money in his pocket. He has many dollars in his pocket.*

died of is correct. Do not say *died with*.

differ, difference, different, differently are never followed by *than*. *I differ with you. We differ with each other. The difference between the two is marked. He works differently from me. This is different from that.*

directly should not be used for *as soon as*. The word is properly used to refer to method, as well as to time. It may also refer to proximity in space. *He went directly to the manager. The employees will follow directly after the executives.*

disagree should be followed by *with* rather than *from*. Say *We disagree with you in principle*; not, *We disagree from you in principle*.

divide should not be followed by *up*. You would not say *division up*.

done must not be used in the imperfect tense for *did*. *I did it*; not *I done it*.

don't, doesn't. There is much everyday usage that would seem to justify *don't* in the singular—*he don't*. But it is not permissible according to correct usage. Use *doesn't* in the singular and *don't* in the plural. *He doesn't. They don't.*

dope, doped, dopey are slang as used in general by young people in business. Do not use such expressions as *dope it out* or *get the dope on*.

doubt that, not *doubt but that* or *doubt but what*, should be used immediately preceding substantive clauses. *I do not doubt that he will come.*

dove is not the imperfect of *dive*; use *dived*.

due to should not be used in the sense of *because of*, *on account of*, *owing to*. *Due* is properly used as a predicate adjective followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with *to*. It cannot modify or refer

to a verb, a phrase, or a clause. *His success is due to his industry. The rent is due.* Not *Due to illness he failed in his promotion.*

each is singular but it refers to two or more individually. Followed by *other*, it should indicate equality of relationship. *Each employee has received his check. The workers help each other.*

either and **neither** are preferably used to indicate one of two persons or things. *They assigned Jones, Brown, and Ferguson but none of them cared for the position* is better than *They assigned Jones, Brown, and Ferguson but neither of them cared for the position.* Or should be used as correlative with *either*; not with *neither*. Say *Neither he nor I will object*; not, *Neither he or I will object.*

elapse, transpire. *Elapse* refers to the passing of time; *transpire* means to reveal or bring something to light or make something known as result of the passing of time. *Two days elapsed between orders and deliveries. It now transpires that our old policy was better than our new one is.* Do not use *transpire* in the sense of *occur* or *happen*.

else should be followed by *but*, not by *than*. Say *No one else may go but him*; not *No one else may go than him*. In most circumstances *but him* would be redundant, inasmuch as the expression containing *else* is usually woven into conversation in such a way as to make the exception clear. Used after *one, everybody, somebody*, in possessive expressions, *else* takes the sign of possession. Say *Somebody else's cash*; not *Somebody's else cash*.

employ is a verb and should not be used for *employment*.

enclosed herewith. Say simply *enclosed*. *Herewith* is superfluous, because you cannot enclose anything under separate cover.

enclosed please find should be used correctly if used at all. It is a hackneyed expression at best. Say *Enclosed find ten dollars (\$10.) for which please send me . . .*; not *Enclosed please find ten dollars (\$10) for which send me . . .* *Please* does not modify *find*. It is better not to capitalize *ten dollars*. If 10 is used without the \$, then it should be in parentheses after *ten*, with the \$, after *dollars*. Enclosures of any kind are preferably indicated at the lower lefthand of the letter sheet, a line below the signature.

enthuse should not be used in the sense of *to evince enthusiasm* or *to become enthusiastic*. It is a vulgarism.

esteemed favor. This term should be excluded from your business vocabulary. It is obsolete.

etc. Do not lean upon this to fill out expressions. It is always indefinite and generic. Say *I bought desks, blotters, files, paperweights, ink, pen, and pencil*; not *I bought desks, blotters, files, etc.*

every implies singular number. It should not be used with *place* to mean *everywhere*. *In* must precede *every* when it is used before *place*. *He has looked everywhere for the ledger, not every place. Everybody ready.*

exceptionable means objectionable. *His conduct in the office was exceptionable* means bad conduct.

exceptional means unusual. *This is an exceptional opportunity for me* means an unusually good opportunity.

execute has little if any place in business letters. You fill orders and carry out plans; you do not necessarily execute them.

expect, used commonly in England for *reckon*, *calculate*, *suppose*, and *think*, should not be so used here. Say *I suppose I should go*, not *I expect I should go*.

explain about. Do not use *about* after *explain*. It is implied in *explain* and does not have to be expressed.

extra is much overused in business in the sense of unusual and exceptional. Do not use in connection with *fine*, *good*, *special*, *quality* for emphasis. *Extra special*, *extra fine* are colloquial, to say the least.

farther and **further**. *Farther* should be used to indicate longitudinal distance, *further* to denote quantity or degree. *He was farther from the jobber than we thought, so we wrote nothing further*.

favor is a kindness, not a letter. A letter may do an act of kindness, but is not a kindness itself. Use this word sparingly or, better still, avoid it altogether in letter writing.

few, **less**. *Few* refers to numbers, *less* (*little*), to quantities and amounts. *I have fewer books than you, and less knowledge*.

fine is too colloquially used in business English. It means excellent, refined, keen, free of fault or impurity. *Fine steel*, *fine seed*, *fine sense of propriety* are good. *Fine train*, *fine vessel*, *fine weather*, *fine crowd* are colloquial.

first is both an adjective and an adverb. Do not use *firstly*.

fix should not be used in the sense of *repair* or *correct*, or in that of *predicament*. Avoid the expression *fix it up*. The word means to attach or make secure. *I shall fix the calendar above the desk*.

following, **after**. Do not habitually use *following* in place of *after*. *He died after a brief illness*, not *He died following a brief illness*. The longer word has almost completely usurped the place of *after* in current journalism. Give the little word a chance.

former and **latter** refer to two only, never to more than two. *Both John and Tom were made cashiers, the former at the downtown office and the latter at the uptown office*.

funny is far too generally and colloquially used. It should not be used as a synonym for *odd*, *strange*, *unique*, *different*, *peculiar*.

gent, **gent friend**, **gentleman friend**, **boy friend**, **girl friend**, **lady friend** are all vulgarisms. Do not use them.

gentleman should not be confused with *man*. Say *salesman*, *man taxi-driver*, *men's room*; not *sales gentleman*, *gentleman taxi-driver*, *gentlemen's room*.

good is, as a rule, an adjective, and must therefore be used only in modification of nouns and pronouns. **Well** is an adverb and should be used in modification of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Say *He works well*; not *He works good*. Say *He did well*; not *He did good*. Say *His health is good* or *He is well*. In the expressions *She is far from a well woman*, *well* is used as an adjective.

got (get). This word is overused. Do not use it after *have* except for emphasis in rare cases. The past participle is *got*, not *gotten*. The latter is archaic. Do not use *get to* in the sense of finding something possible. Not *I didn't get to go*; but *I didn't find it possible to go*. Do not use *get into* for *look into* or *investigate*. Not *Let me get into that drawer*, but *Let me look into that drawer*.

graduate. This word is frequently misused in its imperfect and participial forms. Say *I shall be graduated from business college in June*; not *I shall graduate business college (from business college) in June*. In the same way *I was graduated in June* and *I have been graduated*.

guess means to hazard an opinion which is admittedly insufficient or inaccurate. **Suppose** means to have grounds for assuming something to be true. **Think** is a mental process that follows the logical weighing of points. **Guess** is gamble; *think* is the opposite of gamble. **Suppose** is somewhere between. **Guess**, **expect**, **fancy**, **reckon**, **calculate**, **suppose**, **think**, **suspect** are used altogether too loosely in both oral and written composition. Some of them are localisms. Study them in the dictionary.

had of, **hadn't of**, are vulgarisms. Say *I wish I had gone*; not *I wish I had of gone*. *Had ought*, *hadn't ought* are likewise vulgarisms. Say *I ought to have gone*, not *I hed ought to have gone*.

hand is very stereotyped in letter writing. Avoid its use. Instead of *at hand*, or *has come to hand*, say *Your letter is received*. Instead of *hand you say send you* or *give you*. Instead of *on hand* or *in hand*, say *have*. *Shortbanded* is colloquial for insufficient (workers).

hanged, hung. Of a person say *hanged*, of a thing say *hung*.

hardly should not be used with negative expressions. Say *I can hardly wait till my new secretary comes*; not *I cannot hardly wait till my new secretary comes* (see rarely).

have. Do not use *of* for *have*. Say *I ought to have gone*; not *I ought to of gone*. Do not use *got* after *have* except in rare cases for the sake of emphasis (see *got*).

healthful refers to anything that advances or promotes health; **healthy** means possessing health. *Healthful surroundings make healthy workers*. *Healthful* and *wholesome* may be used almost interchangeably, the former more commonly perhaps in reference to climate; the latter in reference to food, recreation, and influence.

height. Be sure to use this word correctly. There is no such word as *beighth*.

held should not be used in relation to symptoms. Do not ask *How is the patient held?* but *What are the patient's symptoms?*

help is used colloquially in the United States as a generic term for servants and employees. *Short of help* means *insufficient workers*.

hence, thence, whence. In all three of these words *from* is implied. Do not, therefore, use the expressions *from hence*, *from thence*, *from whence*.

here should not be used after *this* or *these* to emphasize what you say. *This here* and *these here* are vulgarisms. But *These, here on the table, are mine* is correct.

herein, hereto, herewith are usually superfluous in business English. Do not use *hereto* with *attached*, or *herem* and *herewith* with *enclosed*.

hish, hi's, hern, hisself, meself, theirselves, youse, theirn, ourn, whosis are all corrupt and illiterate forms of pronouns. Do not use them.

home is preferably not used as an adjective, as in *the home house*. It may be used adverbially as in *They came home*, where motion is indicated, but not otherwise. *He is at home* is correct for the colloquial *He is home*.

humans should not be used as a noun for *men*. Say *We have eighty men in the office*, not *We have eighty humans in the office*.

hustle and **hustler** are too commonly used in business to indicate respectively *haste* and *burry*, and one who makes haste and evinces energy and unusual capability.

if, whether. *If* is used correctly when supposition or condition is implied. *Whether* is used when an alternative is suggested or presented. *I shall decide Tuesday whether I shall go. These shoes are good for another year's wear if soled with Texan.*

imply, infer. *Imply* means to intimate a meaning not expressed, to convey virtually. *Infer* means to come to a conclusion or make a deduction. *Your careless work implies that you do not care whether you lose your position. I infer from your careless work that you don't care whether you lose your position.*

in should not be superfluously used after such words as *do*, *enter*, *play*, *put*, *start*, *work*. It should not be used after *want*. Say *I want to enter*, not *I want in*.

in back of should not be used for *behind*.

in front of is correct, but should be used sparingly for *before*, *preceding*, *ahead*.

ingenious means inventive, original, clever.

ingenuous means frank and trusting in nature.

inside should not be followed by *of*. *Inside of* should not be used for *within*. Say *They were trapped inside or within the vault*; not *They were trapped inside of the vault*. Say *We shall have all investments covered within a week*, not *inside of a week*.

insofar as. The *in* is superfluous and meaningless in this expression. Never use the expression if the simpler *so far as* will do just as well.

inst. is the abbreviation of the Latin word *instant* meaning present. It is correct in legal documents to indicate present month, but not in commercial letters. Indicate a month by its full name.

in, into. The former refers to position, not motion; the latter, to motion rather than to position or location. *He walked into the office* means that he walked from the corridor or the street into the office. *He walked in the office* means that he walked while he was in the office.

invite is a vulgarism for *invitation*. Use it as a verb only.

irregardless. There is no such word. When people use this word they mean *irrespective* or *regardless*. Two negatives make an affirmative; *ir* means *not*, and *less* means *without*. So *irregardless* contradicts itself.

its is the possessive singular of the pronoun *it*. Do not confuse with *it's*—the contraction of *it is*. The apostrophe means that *i* has been omitted. *It's a long column of figures*. *The machine will not work because its handle is broken*.

kind of, sort of should not be used for *somewhat* or *rather*. Say *She is somewhat peculiar*; not *She is sort of peculiar*. But *What sort (or kind) of man is he?* is correct. (Do not use *a, an, or the* after *kind of* and *sort of*. *Kind* and *sort* should be preceded by singular modifiers—*this* or *that*; *kinds* and *sorts*, by plural modifiers—*these* or *those*. Do not use *kind* or *kindly* in a servile or obsequious manner in your letters. They are too frequently used in ordinary statements. They should be reserved for expressions of sincere appreciation and consideration.

lady should not be confused with *woman*. Say *saleswoman, woman chauffeur, women's rest room*; not *saleslady, lady chauffeur, ladies' rest room*.

late, latter, latest, last. *Latter* is used in reference to one of two; *last* and *latest* to one of three or more. Do not use *lastly* for *last* (see *first*). *Last*, like *first*, is sometimes hyphenated with *named* to refer to a special one in a series. These are correct: *Of the two reports the latter is more comprehensive*. *The last of the records will be copied tomorrow*. *The latest score comes from the West*. *Of the ten clerks you mention, the last-named has the greatest ability, the first-named the greatest interest*.

lay (see *lie*).

lead is a noun, the name of a metal. It is also a verb. The imperfect tense of the verb is *led*, pronounced like the noun *lead*. Do not confuse these two words. *Lead is a heavy metal*. *January led in sales*.

leave, let. Do not confuse these two words. *Let* means to permit. *Leave* means to depart. *Let me go. Leave the room. Say Let go of that; not Leave go of that.*

lengthways, sideways, endways are common expressions but they are undesirable and not good substitutes for *lengthwise, sidewise, and endwise.*

lie is a verb meaning to tell a falsehood (*lie, lied, lied*). It is also a noun meaning a falsehood. And it is a verb meaning to recline or rest (*lie, lay, lain*). Do not confuse *lie*, the verb, with *lay* (*lay, laid, laid*), meaning to place. *He laid the book on the cabinet. He lay on the office couch all night.*

like (see *as*).

likely, liable, apt. *Likely* means probable, usually in a favorable sense. *Liable* means responsible, usually in an unfavorable or dangerous sense. *Apt* implies tendency or natural fitness. *You are likely to succeed. He is liable for damages. He is apt at figures, and will succeed in accountancy.*

line is a much overused word. Do not use it for *pursuit* or *occupation*. Do not say *What's your line?* when you mean *What do you do?*

listen should not be used as prefatory to any remark you have to make. Worse, if possible, is the combination *Say, listen! Lookit* is wicked!

loan, lend. Strictly speaking *loan* is a noun and *lend*, a verb. But usage appears to be making *loan* a verb also. *Can you lend me five dollars? Can you make me a loan of five dollars?*

locate is too colloquially used for *find* and *settle*. Say *I cannot find it anywhere*, not *I cannot locate it anywhere*. Say *The company will settle in New Jersey*; not *The company will locate in New Jersey*.

loose, lose. *Loose* means free from anything that binds; it also means incoherence in thought or expression. *Lose* means to fail, to be defeated, to part with anything unintentionally. *The bolt in this machine is loose. Do not lose your pencil.*

lot, lots are too frequently and too loosely used to indicate abstractions. They may properly be used to indicate parcel or quantity. Say *We have a new lot of goods*; not *I had lots of fun*.

majority, minority, plurality. *Majority* means more than half of any given number, as of voters. *Minority* means less than half of any given number. *Plurality* means more than any other of three or more totals. Out of one hundred votes, sixty would be a majority and forty a minority. If out of one hundred votes one candidate receives sixty, another thirty, and another ten, the first has a plurality of thirty votes—the excess of his votes over his closest competitor. He likewise has a majority of the votes cast.

merely, simply. *Merely* implies the lack of something, only, barely; *simply* means not involved, not complicated. *He quoted merely on conveyor belts. He quoted so simply that we understood at once.*

most should not be used for the adverb *almost*. Say *The work is almost done*, not *The work is most done*. Use this superlative form of the

adjective *much* very sparingly before adjectives and adverbs that themselves indicate superlative qualities (see *almost*).

much, many. *Much* refers to quantity; *many*, to number. *I have many pennies and much paste.*

mutual means *reciprocal, interchanged*. Speakers and writers often confuse *common* and *mutual*. That is common in which two or more share, as *Misfortune is common*. That is mutual which is equally reciprocal or interchanged, as, *Esteem between the secretary and the treasurer is mutual*. In *This action will be of mutual benefit to both you and ourselves, you and ourselves* repeats *mutual*. *This action will be of mutual benefit* is sufficient.

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves. These reflexive or intensive forms should not be used for the simple personal pronouns except in rare cases for emphasis. Do not say *Harry and myself are ready*; but *Harry and I are ready*.

nd (or **d**) should not be used after a figure to indicate an ordinal in a letter. Write *2* or *second*, not *2d* or *2nd*. Figures and letters combined to stand for a word are hybrid forms.

near should not be used for *nearly* after *not*. *There was not nearly (not near) enough to supply the party*. *Near* may be used as an adjective, an adverb, a preposition, a verb. *Near associates frequently become friends*. *There is your machine with the copy lying near*. *She sat near me*. *The train nears the city*.

new means never used before; **novel** means strange or queer or unusual, as well as new. *A novel attachment to my desk folds my letters for me*.

nice is a much overused word for more definite and expressive adjectives. Use it sparingly and correctly. Its real meaning is *exact, fastidious, fine, keen, precise*.

no good is a slang term if not a vulgarity, when used in the sense of *worthless* or *not good*. Avoid it.

nohow is a vulgarity sometimes used for *anyhow* or *anyway*. Avoid it.

none refers to more than two; **neither** to one of two. *None* may be singular or plural. It is regarded as plural when it refers to no persons or no things, as *None of these appeals move me*; as singular when it refers to parts, as, *None but the brave deserves the fair*. Some business houses rule that, since *none* is a contraction of *no one*, it should always be regarded as singular. (See *either*.)

nor should always be used as correlative with *neither*. But it is by no means always correlative with other negatives. In a negative expression that is merely an explanatory or amplifying one, *nor* may follow *no*, for *no* in such case is the equivalent of *neither*: *He has no cash nor credit* is equivalent to *He has neither cash nor credit*. But in *He has no resources or credit*, *credit* is logically in apposition with *resources* and or connects the two without any reference to *no* whatever. *No* is an adjective modifying both *resources* and *credit*. Ob-

serve these: *There is no paper nor ink on the desk.* (*No* and *nor* connect equally important alternatives, and *no* is equivalent to *neither*.) *He has no will or inclination to do the work.* Here *or* merely amplifies, *will* and *inclination* are the same, and *no* modifies both adjectively.

no sooner—a comparative form—should always be followed by *than* rather than by *when*. *I had no sooner entered than he approached me.* (See *than*.)

notable and **noted** mean worthily famous, celebrated, highly reputable.

notorious means of bad repute, disreputable. **Notoriety** means unpleasant and damaging publicity.

nowheres is a vulgarism for *nowhere*. Avoid it.

number is usually regarded as singular when preceded by *the*; as plural when preceded by *a*. *The number of typewriters is limited.* *A number of accountants were present at the convention.*

O, oh. *O* is used with the vocative, that is, with direct address, as well as with exclamations. *O John, where have you been? O dear me!* It is not followed by the comma. *Oh* is used to express strong feeling. It is followed by the comma. *And oh, the difference to me!*

oblige is preferably omitted from the last sentence of a letter.

observation, observance. The former means the act of seeing or looking; the latter, the act of respecting a custom or tradition. *Speak of the observance of the Sabbath and of the observation of the stars.*

of is illiterate after *could, had, may, might, must, ought to, should, would*. *Say could have, may have, might have, must have, ought to have, should have, would have.* Do not use *of* after *remember*. *Say I remember seeing that account, not I remember of seeing that account.*

off should not be used superfluously after such words as *count, call, keep, number, mark*. Do not confuse *off* with *away from*. *Say The ship is a mile off shore; not The ship is a mile away from shore.*

off of should not be used for *off* or *from*. *Say I got the report from Tom; not, I got the report off of Tom.*

official means authoritative; **officious**, meddling. *This is our first official report. His new secretary is too officious.*

on, in the expressions *He took it on me* and *We have a sale on ties*, is a vulgarism. Avoid this use of it. Do not use *on* before *about*. *Say He will arrive about the tenth of the month; not on about the tenth of the month.* *On* should not be superfluously used after such words as *go, count, plan, start, talk*. These expressions are not good: *count on* (your coming), *go on* (last year's figure), *plan on* (going), *start on* (that copying), *talk on* (about this subject).

one should not be preceded by *a*. *Ones* should not be preceded by *these* or *those* or used for them. *Say I haven't one; not I haven't a one. Say I mean these on the table; not I mean these ones on the table.*

- only** should always be placed as closely as possible to the word it modifies. Say *I have worked for only three days*; not *I have only worked for three days*. Do not use *only* conjunctively for *but*, if it had not been, or *except that*. Say *I could have typed that report if it had not been that I had to take dictation or but I had to take dictation or except for the fact that I had to take dictation*; not *I could have typed that report only I had to take dictation*. Do not use *only* in negative expressions. Say *I have only one*; not *I haven't only one*.
- onto** should not be used in the sense of *place upon*. The word *on* or *upon* is preferable. *Onto*, like *ain't*, is a vulgarism. It is slang in *I am on to you*, and in this bad usage is usually written in two words.
- opinion** is sometimes more than an impression. It is a conclusion or judgment held with confidence. The word should not be used interchangeably with *idea*. An idea may be a misconception with or without foundation. One may have an idea of a prospective sale, but his opinion of the sale after it has been made may be very different.
- our** Mr. Jones is no longer in good use. Say *Mr. Jones, our representative or our director*.
- out**. This word is much overused. Avoid its superfluous use in such expressions as *out loud* for *aloud*, *lose out* for *lose*, *start out* for *start*, *test out* for *test*, *win out* for *win*.
- over** is too loosely used in business correspondence. Say *More than four weeks*; not *Over four weeks*. Say *That sale was closed long ago*; not *That sale was over long ago*.
- pair** is singular; **pairs**, plural. Do not use the former with a plural verb. Say *This pair is faulty* and *Two pairs are faulty*, not *Two pair are faulty*.
- pamphlet**, like *booklet*, *leaflet*, *hamlet*, should not be preceded by *small* or *little*. The suffix *let* means *little*.
- pants** is a vulgarism for *trousers* and *pantaloons*. *Gents wear pants; gentlemen wear trousers*.
- part** should not be used with *on* and *our* or *your* for the simple possessive. Say *This was our error*; not *This was an error on our part*. Say *Thank you for your courtesy*; not *Thank you for the courtesy on your part*.
- partly** means incomplete or in some degree. **Partial** means biased. Say *The printing is partly done*, not *partially done*.
- per** should not be used for *a* in strictly good English expressions. It is correctly used in such expressions as *per diem*, *per annum*, *per cent*. But say *I shall pay you five dollars a day*.
- person** and **party** should not be confused. The former means one individual; the latter, a group or body (except in the strictly legal use). *Persons* is preferable to *people*. Say *We think he is the right person* or *They are the right persons*; not *We think he is the right party* and *They are the right people*. *Each party to the contract was satisfied and the president was the person who signed it*.

place should not be used after *any, every, no, some*—*any place, every place, no place, some place*—for *anywhere, everywhere, nowhere, somewhere*.

plead indicates the use of feeling and human-interest in an attempt to persuade. You argue a question but plead a cause.

plenty should not be used for *plentiful* or *plentifully*. Say *Money is plentiful*; not *Money is plenty*. Say *He supplied us plentifully*; not *He supplied us plenty*. Do not use *plenty* adverbially. *Plenty good enough* is a vulgarism.

portion is a part of the word *proportion* and means a proportionate part or share. *Part* means any fraction of. Say *I shall spend part of my time in writing letters*, and *I shall receive my portion of the estate*.

posted should not be used in the sense of *informed*. Say *I shall keep you informed*; not *I shall keep you posted*.

practical means pertaining to actual use as opposed to *ideal* or *theoretical*. *Practicable* means *usable, workable, capable of being put into use*. *She is a practical dressmaker. The proposed substitute for hook and eye is not practicable*.

prefer should not be followed by *than* or *rather*. It is not a comparative form. It should be followed by *to, above, or before*. *I prefer the roll-top desk to the flat-top desk. The former is preferable to the latter, as far as I'm concerned*.

prescribe (see *proscribe*)

pretty is too frequently used for *very*.

principal, principle. The former, as a noun, means head or chief as well as capital sum; as an adjective, highest or best in rank of importance. *Principle* means truth, belief, policy, conviction, or general hypothesis.

profit, gain. *Gain* refers to transactions that are conducted on a large scale, income from which is attended with some irregularity and uncertainty. *Profit* refers to income that accrues in a more or less regular manner, as a just reward for industry. *His investments show remarkable gains. His investment in oil nets him large annual profits*.

promise should never be used to indicate assurance. Promise always implies futurity. Say *I assure you, he was ashamed*; not *He was ashamed, I promise you*.

proposal, proposition. A proposal is something placed before one, or more than one, for acceptance or rejection, usually concerning a course of action; a proposition is a formal statement or exposition presented for consideration rather than for immediate action. It is too loosely used in the sense of *plan, task, question, problem*. *My proposal for the income blank is now ready. I shall outline my proposition at the meeting*.

proscribe means to outlaw or ostracize. The noun form is *proscription*. Do not confuse with **prescribe**, meaning to give, as a law or a direction. Its noun form is *prescription*. *He has been proscribed as result of his criminal record. A thoro overhauling of the books is proscribed*.

prosecute means to follow up regularly and without injurious intent; to start legal procedure. Do not confuse with *persecute* meaning to pursue with injurious intent. *He prosecutes his duty faithfully in spite of an employer who persecutes him.*

proven should not be used for **proved** as the past participle of *prove*. It may be used as an adjective.

providing is the present participle of *provide*. It should not be used for *if, provided, on condition that*. *I'll go provided you wish me to be correct.*

prox. is the abbreviation of the Latin word *proximo* meaning next. It is correct in legal documents to indicate next month, but not in commercial letters. Indicate a month by its full name.

purpose refers to what lies in our own minds as an act of will; *propose* refers to what we say or offer to others. What we propose is open to deliberation, what we purpose is not. In case we propose something to or by ourselves, not stated to others, then *propose* means practically the same as *purpose*. *I purpose to deal squarely in business. I propose to help you in this way if you will let me.* Do not use *propose* in the sense of *intend*.

put, in such expressions as *put up with, put over, put out, put in, put across*, is a much overused "slang assistant." Avoid its use in these connections.

quite is too frequently used for *very* or *rather*. Its real meaning is *really, truly, wholly, positively*. It is to be avoided in all such uses as *quite some, quite a few, quite a job, quite a little, quite a lot, quite some work*.

raise, rise. *Raise* should never be used as a noun, and *rise* but seldom. *My salary was raised; not I got a raise in salary. Say This man will rise to the top. This man's rise is assured and The rise and fall of Sovietism are acceptable.*

rarely ever, seldom ever. *Ever* is superfluous in these combinations. Do not say *seldom (rarely) or ever. We seldom (rarely) or never go there and We seldom (rarely), if ever, go there* are correct forms. *Rarely, scarcely, hardly* should not be used in negative expressions. Say *I rarely see him; not I don't rarely see him. Say I have scarcely any; not I haven't scarcely any.*

rd (or d) should not be used after a figure to indicate an ordinal in a letter. Write *3 or third, not 3d or 3rd*. Figures and letters combined to stand for a word are hybrid forms.

real, really, very. *Real* is an adjective; it should not therefore be used for the adverbs *really* and *very*. Say *We want you to know what a very (really) high-grade material this is*, not *We want you to know what a real high-grade material this is*. Say *This is a very good offer; not This is a real good offer*. *Really* should be placed as closely as possible to the word it modifies. Say *I think he really has it right at last; not I really think he has it right at last*. There are circumstances, however, under which the latter may be correct, too they would be rare (see page 147).

reason should not be followed by *because, because of, due to, on account of*. It is in a way a synonym for all of these terms. Say *The reason for his leaving was that his services were unsatisfactory to the manager*; not *The reason for his leaving was because of or due to or on account of unsatisfactory services*.

receipt is almost exclusively a business letter word. In conversation we say *on receiving your message*, not *on receipt of your message*. The former is, therefore, better in letters.

recent date means nothing. Name the date specifically or, if this cannot be done, identify follow-up by referring to the subject of a letter or by quoting briefly from it.

reckon means to look upon or consider in a more general sense than by means of sheer computation or calculation. Do not use it loosely for *think, guess, believe, fancy*.

remit, send. *Remit* means to send in return for something. *Send* means to cause or direct to go or pass. *Please send me the following articles and I shall remit the amount due*.

respectable means worthy of respect, of good and fair repute; *respectful* means showing regard for, *respective* means several or separate or sequential by units. *He was respectable in appearance, and he was respectful to his superiors when he greeted them in their respective offices*. Do not say *yours respectively* for *yours respectfully*.

right away, right off, right quick, right smart should not be used in the sense of *quickly* or *immediately*.

run should not be used for its imperfect tense *ran*. It should not be used in the sense of *manage* or *operate, condition, or appearance*. Do not say *How do they run?* when you mean to ask the general appearance and condition of a number of things. Do not say *He runs the house organ* when you mean that some one manages the house organ.

same should not be used as a pronoun, in place of *it, they, that*, and other pronouns. Exception may be made to this rule in legal phraseology. *In reply to same* is incorrect. Like *advise* and *favor*, *same* gives letters a hackneyed tone. In legal phraseology *same* is correctly used as a pronoun.

say should not be used at the beginning of every remark you make (see *listen*). *I say* is a similarly bad prefatory signal in conversation.

scarcely (see *rarely* and *than*).

scared of is sometimes colloquial for *scared at*. Use the latter instead. *Scared about* is also permissible.

set is singular; **sets**, plural. Do not use the former with a plural verb. Say *This set is perfect*, and *Two sets are perfect*; not *Two set are perfect*.

shall, will. When in doubt always use *shall* in the first person, *will* in the second and third persons. In nine cases out of ten you will probably be right. So used, *shall* and *will* express simple future time.

Shall used in the second and third persons expresses willingness, desire, or determination, and *will* used in the first person does the same. *I will not sign the requisition* indicates determination. *I shall sign the requisition* indicates mere future time. *You shall sign and he shall sign* indicate no willing on the part of the subject but rather forced determination from without. In most cases *will* in the first person and *shall* in the second and third persons may be kept clear by the user's remembering that *will* refers to actual exercise of the subject's will power, and *shall* to the will power of another exercised upon him; that *will* is subjective and *shall* objective.

shape should be used sparingly in the sense of *condition, circumstance, situation*. Do not say *How do they shape up?* for *What is the general appearance or condition?* Do not say *He left the paper in good shape* for *He left the paper in good condition*.

shoot is objectionable slang for *proceed, tell me, go ahead*. Do not use it

show is to be avoided in the sense of *opportunity or chance*. Say *He never had an opportunity*; not *He never had a show*. This word has long been used colloquially to indicate an entertainment of some kind. Followed by *up—show up*—it becomes a phrasal vulgarity.

sick of is slang for *tired of*. In biblical language *sick of a fever* is correct usage. *Sick with* is equally good in this sense. Do not say *sick from*.

sight should not be used to indicate excessive amount. Say *We have much wheat*; not *We have a sight of wheat*.

sit, set. The former means to take position; the latter to place in position. *Sit* is usually intransitive; *set*, transitive. *Stand, lie, rest, repose* may usually be substituted for *set*. Say *The typewriter stands on the table*; not *The typewriter sets on the table*. Say *The ledger lies on the shelf*; not *The ledger sets on the shelf*. But note these exceptions: *The sun sets over the hills*. *Her dress sets (or sits) well across the shoulders*. *He set forth on his trip to visit the trenches*; and the British *She sits her horse well*.

size. Do not use the expression *size up* to indicate *estimate or judge*. Do not use it in imperfect tense form to denote large or small. *These shoes are large sized* is a vulgarity, as is also *How do the apples size up?* *We sell the larger-sized coats* and *We sell coats of all sizes* are correct.

so should be used correlatively with *as* in negative statements. *It is not so warm as it was*. It should not be used alone for *so that*. Say *I hope I succeed, so that I may be promoted*; not *I hope I pass, so (or so as) I may be promoted*. Say *It was screwed to the desk so that it would hold*; not *It was screwed to the desk so it would hold*. Do not use *so* alone to modify an adverb or adjective. *So slowly, so beautiful* are vague and indefinite expressions.

some should not be used in the sense of *somewhat* or of *good, real, fine, remarkable*. It is slang in *That was some speech you made*.

some time should be written as two words when *time* is a noun modified by *some*; as one word when used as an adjective; *sometimes* is an adverb and is never written as two words.

somewheres is a vulgarism for *somewhere*. Do not use it.

sort of (see *kind of*)

st should not be used after a figure to indicate an ordinal in a letter. Write *1* or *first*, not *1st*. Figures and letters combined to stand for a word are hybrid forms.

stand for should not be used in the sense of *allow*, *permit*, *countenance*, *endure*.

start. Do not use *in* and *out* in excess after this word. Both are really implied in it.

state (**would state**) should be used little if at all in business letters. It is hackneyed and high-sounding. Usually one of these may be used instead—*acknowledge*, *acquaint*, *affirm*, *announce*, *assert*, *attest*, *contend*, *convey*, *declare*, *explain*, *express*, *give*, *inform*, *inquire*, *maintain*, *mention*, *notify*, *observe*, *prescribe*, *profess*, *pronounce*, *propose*, *recite*, *refer*, *relate*, *remark*, *say*, *speak*, *submit*, *suggest*, *talk*, *tell*, *urge*, *voice*.

steal should not be used as a noun. Do not speak of *a big steal* or of some one's making or getting *a steal on you*.

strength, length. Be sure to pronounce the *g* in these words. Do not say or write *strenth* and *lenth*.

such, preceding a relative clause, requires the relative pronoun *as* to complete the sentence. Say *We shall conduct the inquiry under such regulations as the court prescribes*, not *We shall conduct the inquiry under such regulations that the court prescribes*. *Such* does not mean *very*, and should not be used for it. Not *I had such a hard time of it*; but *I had a very hard time of it*.

sure, used for *surely* or *certainly*, is slang. The proper answer to *Are you sincere?* is *surely*, not *sure*.

surprise has little if any place in business letters. Say *We are sorry you have had difficulty with the container*; not *We are surprised you have had difficulty with the container*.

suspect is the verb form of *suspicion*. Say *suspected*, not *suspicioned*.

swank is slang (British) for *high-class*, *aristocratic*, *swagger*. Do not use it.

swell is the corresponding American slang term for *swunk*. Do not use it in the sense of *fashionable*, *stylish*, *excellent*, *fine*.

take. Do not use *in* after *take* to mean *attended*. You do not *take in* a show; you *see* or *attend* one. *To be taken in*, that is, *to be cheated*, is a colloquial use of this word. Do not say *take and* as prefatory to some contemplated action, as, *take and stir*, *take and go*, *take and type*. The latter verb is in each example usually sufficient.

teach means to impart knowledge, to instruct; **learn** means to gather or acquire knowledge. *He taught us how to use the adding machine and we were eager to learn*.

tell should not be used as a noun in the sense of *gossip, chat, rumor*. Do not say *I never heard tell of such a thing*.

th should not be used after a figure to indicate an ordinal in a letter. Write 4 or *fourth*, not *4th*. Figures and letters combined to stand for a word are hybrid forms.

than should be used after the comparative degree. After *no sooner, no better, no earlier*, and other negative comparatives *than*, not *when*, is correct. Say *We had no sooner added the column than new figures were brought to us*; not *We had no sooner added the column when new figures were brought to us*. Say *Scarcely had we added the column when new figures were brought to us*, not *Scarcely had we added the column than new figures were brought to us*.

that is a relative pronoun used to refer to persons, animals, things. It should not be used as an adverb of degree. Say *It was so badly done we could not use it*; not *It was that inaccurate*. Do not say *that there* or (plural) *those there*. Do not use *those* to modify *kind* or *sort*. *That* is preferably used with restrictive clauses.

them is in the objective case. Do not use it in a possessive sense. *Them books* is wrong. *Those books* is correct.

there should not be used after *that* or *those* to emphasize what you say. *That there* and *those there* (and, of course, *them there*) are vulgarisms. But *Those, there on the table, are mine* is correct (see *here*).

therefor stands for a prepositional phrase, *for that, for this, for it, for the matter referred to*. *I did the work, and am responsible therefor*. *Therefore* is a conjunction of reason, result, conclusion, addition, meaning (in the first two offices) for that reason or cause. *I did the work, and am therefore responsible. I did the work and am responsible therefor*.

thing is greatly overused. It should never be applied to a person. Aim to get from the dictionary the specific equivalent for it whenever you are tempted to use it loosely.

this should not be used as an adverb of degree. Say *The ink has never been so thick before*, not *The ink has never been this thick before*. Do not say *This here* or (plural) *these here*. Do not use *these* to modify *kind* or *sort*.

thru should not be used as a verb. Say *I am done with him*, not *I am thru with him*.

thru an oversight on our part, your order has not been shipped. It is better to say *Thru our oversight your order has not been shipped* (see *part*).

together should not be used after such words as *collect, collaborate, combine, cooperate, correlate, unite*.

ton is singular. Say *three tons*; not *three ton*.

try and should not be used for *try to*. *Try to go* is correct; not *try and go*. The infinitive *to go* is object of the verb *try*.

ult. is the abbreviation of the Latin word *ultimo* meaning last. It is correct in legal documents to indicate last month, but not in commercial letters. Indicate a month by its full name.

unique means the only one of a kind. It cannot, therefore, be compared. Do not say *more unique* or *most unique*. Do not confuse with *rare* which means uncommon or infrequent.

up. Avoid the excessive use of this word in slang and colloquial expressions. *End up, show up, pay up, stand up, loosen up, divide up, start up, turn up, wash up, finish up, dry up, polish up, wipe up, connect up, cripple up, open up, close up, settle up, scratch up, bungle up* are a few of the expressions more or less commonly used in which *up* is superfluous.

up to you is slang for *your work or your responsibility*. Say *That task is for you to do*; not *That's up to you*.

use, no use, what use, are frequently badly used without the preceding *of*. Say *of no use, of what use*.

used to have, used to could. These are illiterate forms for *I once had* and *I once could*, respectively.

usen't. There is no such word. Do not use it for *was not accustomed to*. Do not say *I usen't to* for *Formerly I did not*.

very and **too** are preferably not used immediately preceding a participle to modify it. An adverb should be placed between the participle and these words. *Very much pleased*, rather than *very pleased*; *too seriously hurt*, rather than *too hurt*, *very greatly handicapped*, rather than *very handicapped*.

valued favor is *not* a synonym for *letter*. Do not use it (see *esteemed favor*).

vocation, avocation. *Avocation* is minor or subsidiary occupation; *vocation*, major, systematic, and remunerative employment.

wait. Followed by *on*—*wait on*—implies service of some kind, followed by *for*—*wait for*—implies awaiting. Do not say *I'll wait on you for ten minutes* when you mean that you will *await* or *wait for* some one.

want to should not be used for *should, ought, must*. Say *You must keep that drawer locked*; not *You want to keep that drawer locked*.

way is singular, and should be kept singular used after *little, short, long*. Say *a little way, a short way, a long way*; not *a little ways, a short ways, a long ways*. Do not use the plural form after *any*; say *anyway*, not *anyways*. Do not use *way* in the sense of *away*. Say *I'm going away down south*, not *I'm going way down south*.

well is an adverb, and should properly be used therefore only in the modification of verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Do not use it in place of *good*. *He looks well. It will be well worth your while to take the job* (see *good*).

what should not be used for *that* after *but*. Say *They do not know but that he will come*; not *They do not know but what he will come* (see *but*).

when, while. The former refers to time as definite and complete; the latter, to time in progress or duration. *When he arrives let me know. While you were out, I wrote a letter.*

where should not be used to introduce a noun clause. Say *I see that Ferguson has gone out of business*; not *I see where Ferguson has gone out of business*. Do not use *at* or *to* after questions beginning with *where*. Say *Where is the ink?* not *Where is the ink at?* Say *Where are you going?* not *Where are you going to?* (See *at*.)

whether does not have to be followed by *or not* unless emphasis is required. Say *I do not know whether he is right*; not *I do not know whether he is right or not*. *Whether* and *or* are correlatives, not *whether* and *if*. Say *Kindly tell us whether we shall manufacture a new lot*; not *Kindly tell us if we shall manufacture a new lot*.

which is a relative pronoun referring to both animals and things. It may introduce both restrictive and non-restrictive clauses. Do not use *which* to refer to persons.

who refers to persons. It may introduce both restrictive and non-restrictive clauses. Do not use *who* to refer to animals or things.

wholesome refers to that which is good for one physically or morally, as, *wholesome food, wholesome atmosphere for young people* (see *healthful*).

whose should not be used as the possessive of *which*. It is the possessive of *who* only, unless the thing referred to by *which* is commonly personified (like *ship*, for instance), in which case *whose* may be used as the possessive of *which*. Where *in which* is awkward *whose* is, however, coming into general use.

with should not be superfluously used after such words as *done, in, over, out, thru*.

without, unless. The former is a preposition or an adverb; the latter, a conjunction. Say *I shall not go without you* or *I shall not go unless you do*; not *I shall not go without you do*. In *He waits without*, *without* is an adverb.

worse is the comparative form of *bad*, and *worst* is the superlative. Say *If worse comes to worst*; not *If worst comes to worst*. We go from *bad to worse* and from *worse to worst*, or from *good to better* and from *better to best*.

would have should not be used for *had* in conditional clauses. Say *If he had balanced the books correctly he might have been promoted*; not *If he would have balanced the books correctly, he might have been promoted*.

would say and wish to say are obsolete. Speak directly. Do not use such roundabout expressions.

writer should not be used in business letters in a strained and self-conscious effort to avoid using *I* or *me*. Say *Your note has been referred to me*; not *Your note has been referred to the writer or to the undersigned*.

your Mr. Jones is no longer in good use. Say *Mr. Jones, your representative or your director*.

COMMENCING

Since first impressions are lasting, the opening of a letter, like the opening of any other piece of worthwhile expression, should be direct and engaging. It should be objective, that is, it should aim always to touch some interest of the person for whom it is intended, the one who is to read it. Not so very long ago this essential quality in the opening of a letter was interpreted and taught to mean that the *you*-attitude—even the word *you* itself—must be used prominently in this position. And it is good to do this to a degree, provided it is done easily and naturally and not too obviously (see page 124). There are other ways, however, of engaging the attention of a reader. A third-personal interest, such as baseball or football for instance (see page 17), may sometimes initiate reader-hold quite as effectively as any sort of deliberate second-personal “play.” A domestic note, a general business note, a general-affairs note—gracefully linked with the prospect and the subject-matter of the letter—may prove quite as inescapable as the concentrated *you*-focus. A too conscious effort to “star” YOU may result in complete estrangement.

While it is advisable not to open a letter with *I* or *we* or with any other phrasology that may tend to make it subjective, this rule like other good rules has its exceptions. There are good letters—sometimes prize-winning letters—that not only ignore but seemingly defy the rule. The important thing to remember, however, is that the rules of the game had better be followed by the majority, and that the exceptional rule-breaker succeeds not because he breaks the rule but because he is able to instil other qualities that outweigh such violation.

These are good definite openings:

- The parts you want were shipped this morning.
- You shall have those lockers on the date you specify.
- Your boxes are ready and we are awaiting your directions for shipping.
- Your representative, Mr. Harold B. Davis, will present our case to you on his return.

The opening of a letter should, therefore, be fresh (in the proper sense), direct, engaging, sympathetic, objective, attractive, positive, unusual (but in no sense freakish). A single word that links explicitly with something that has preceded in correspondence may be very good. "Yes. We like those samples" and "Thanks. Those shirts are everything you promised they would be" are openings taken from prize letters. The opening of a letter should not be stereotyped, negative, aggressive, fawning, careless, dull, impertinent, freakish. Neither, of course, should any other part of a letter. But the qualities suggested by these words would be especially bad at the very beginning. By way of summary or formula, then, the opening of a letter, especially of a business letter, should be

THIS

objective rather than subjective
positive rather than negative
direct and immediate rather than
introductory or preliminary

THIS

You are quite right about those
lamp shades.

Thank you for notifying us promptly
about that breakage.

Your merchandise was shipped this
very morning.

Thank you for your letter of the
twelfth.

May I ask you to consider the fol-
lowing, please, in relation to the
position you have open?

Your order of March tenth is ap-
preciated.

NOT THIS

aggressive
hackneyed
participial
uninteresting

NOT THIS

We have your letter of the tenth
about those lamp shades.

Your complaint about the break-
age is just at hand.

We are in receipt of your order
of May third, and have pleasure
in informing you that the goods
went forward this morning.

Your esteemed favor of the twelfth
is at hand and contents noted.

I'm the party you ought to have
in that vacant position.

Acknowledging

Answering

Complying with

Confirming

Noting

Referring to

Replying to

Welcoming

} yours of March
tenth

After all, it is primarily the tone conveyed that makes a letter opening good or bad. The foregoing exposition emphasizes the qualities that tend to make it good and those that tend to make it

bad. In the examples below it should be noted that sometimes a *you*-appeal, sometimes surprise (not shock), sometimes a question, sometimes an exclamation, sometimes a courteous command, sometimes an arresting declaration may yield exactly the intriguing quality desired. Perhaps there are a few that violate some of the qualities mentioned above as essentials. All have been taken from actual letters. Unanimity of approval of these openings is not expected. Like other illustrations in this book, they are presented with the understanding that different enterprises require different and ever-changing letter treatment (see preface). If they do nothing more than reveal the fact that openings may be successfully written without leaning upon participial phrases, they will have served an important purpose. All should be compared with letter openings that precede and follow in this book.

Good openings from friendly letters by literary persons (see pages 1 to 110):

- I am going to be married.—Lord Byron
- What shall I say for myself?—John Keats
- Throw yourself on the world.—Charles Lamb
- Now let us begin to quarrel.—Charlotte Brontë
- Of course I am a rogue!—Robert Louis Stevenson
- Here I am at Haworth once more.—Charlotte Brontë
- I'm beginning really to have hopes of you.—John Ruskin
- And it is a year since we parted from you?—Charles Lamb
- You will think me a beast for my silence.—Robert Buchanan
- You have seen in the papers . . .—Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- Blessings on your kind heart, my dear Dickens—Francis Jeffrey
- It is boring to trouble you with such "small gear."—Lord Byron
- It is orfle cold here and I don't know what to do.—Edward Lear
- Set me down as a wretch—but hear me.—Elizabeth Barrett Brown-
ing
- Nobody more and more justly talked of than yourself.—Sydney
Smith
- So you insist upon my taking my poem to town with me.—Thomas
Moore

- You may count this as two letters and give me credit accordingly.
—James Russell Lowell
- After many offs and ons I have at last concluded a treaty with
Constable.—Walter Scott
- And it is a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton
stage?—William Wordsworth
- I send you a little line and shake your hand across the water.—
William Makepeace Thackeray
- Though I did not like the date of your last letter, I liked the rest
of it very well.—William Temple
- This is a pretty state of things! Seven o'clock and no word of
breakfast!—Robert Louis Stevenson
- Oh, my! I wonder whether I shall hear tomorrow morning, and
what I shall hear!—Jane Welsh Carlyle
- My dear Sir—(which I will exchange for your own name if you
will set me example)—Edward Fitz-Gerald
- The only impression left by you on my mind is an increased desire
to see you again.—Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- No one has so good a title as you to command me in all my
strength and in all my weakness.—Walter Scott
- A traveler once entered a western hotel in America and went up
to the clerk in his box (as the custom is in that country) and
ordered chicken for his dinner. the clerk, without any trouble in
his face, put his hand into his desk, and drew out a derringer,
wherewith he covered the newcomer and said in a calm historic
voice "Stranger, you will not have chicken, you will have hash."
—William Morris

*These openings have been used in successful letters of application
(see pages 294 to 305):*

- The above advertisement clipped from the —— interests me for
the following reasons.
- May I submit the following statement of qualifications and experi-
ence in answer to your advertisement for a —— in the morn-
ing ——?
- Will you please consider me for the position you have to offer as
indicated in the advertisement pasted above, from the evening
——.
- You need a thoroly trained and experienced stenographer, accord-
ing to the advertisement pasted and noted above. Will you please
consider my qualifications as here listed.
- I am writing you in the hope that my education and experience
in accounting will meet the requirements of the position you have
to offer.

- In follow-up to your advertisement for an experienced secretary may I ask you to consider, please, my equipment for the job, as follows.
- May I offer you my services in response to your advertisement in the evening ———? (I attach the advertisement at the inside-address position.) Following is a seriatim statement of my education, experience, and other qualifications for the position.
- In answer to your advertisement for a ——— in the morning ——— I submit the following items regarding myself as a candidate for the position, along with copies of testimonials.
- The following details of my education and experience will, I hope, entitle me to serious consideration for the position you have to offer, according to your advertisement in this morning's ———, enclosed with stamps in the cellophane envelope.
- Your advertisement (pasted above) seems to spell opportunity for me, if you will pardon my optimism. Will you please consider the following facts in regard to my education, experience, parentage, character, and previous earnings, and tell me whether the "spelling" is correct? For your reply I enclose a stamped addressed envelope in which you will find copies of recommendations as well as my photograph.

These good openings are taken from the letters of a business manager who dictates hundreds every week on the various subjects involved in general merchandising—letters of the "daily round" (see pages 310 to 327):

- Yes, we have a complete stock of Marvlo Products, and for your use in ordering we enclose a list of prices and item numbers.
- You may be sure that there will be "big goings-on" at that next meeting, so keep the date religiously, please?
- Just as soon as you notify us of the number and the year of your machine, we shall send you the required part. The enclosed card provides the necessary fill-ins, and it is stamped and addressed.
- Thank you for your order. The goods are now being packed and will be on their way to you by noon today.
- Inasmuch as we deliver by wagon in Oronta during the summer, we are refunding the amount of express charges you so kindly prepaid.
- Your contention is quite reasonable, of course, and we shall do everything possible to make the delivery companies understand the special circumstances.
- You may be sure that we shall cooperate with you heartily in your efforts to pass this highly desirable legislation.
- Is it possible for us to arrive at a better understanding in regard to those every-other-day deliveries?

- The number that you refer to will be found in the supplement to our —— catalog, copy of which we enclose and mark.
- While we share your feelings about the Coley problem, we are unable at present to help you with any solution.

It is shown elsewhere that letters of claim lend themselves naturally to the acid tone. Those to whom unsatisfactory merchandise has been sent are likely to feel ruffled, even when they themselves are at fault. The following claim openings (more than mere openings in some cases) may, therefore, be worthy of special notice here (see pages 332 to 341):

- It's probably my own fault that the wrong size of presser has been delivered to me, but will you please bring me a number ten as soon as possible and take the smaller one away?
- Many seasons ago, when I became one of your first subscribers, I was told that as the years went by, my seats would be made better and better. See what's happened to me now!
- We were very sorry indeed to be obliged to refuse your merchandise when it was delivered. But it was two weeks late, and we had been unable to get word from you even after telegraphing.
- Are we wrong in thinking that your last shipment to us does not measure up in quality to former shipments of Castle-Ray? We are reluctant to place any more orders until we have had a talk with your manager.
- You did your best, I know, and I'm appreciative. But I shall have to trouble you just once more.
- When your wagon called I was not home, and the maid did not understand. So will you please call again at your convenience for that table?
- Sorry to be a nuisance, but those curtains are not right yet. If Mr. Newman can call on Friday between nine and twelve, I shall make it a point to be here.
- May we ask you to examine the enclosed sheet of paper and compare it with the sample from which we requested our order filled? We *think* there has been a mistake somewhere.
- Now that I have the dress at home, I do not like it, and I must ask you to call for it and let me come in to look at another.
- Somewhere out in the wide open spaces that carton of biscuits must have been exposed to rain, for they were dough when they reached us. If you will send us another carton right away, we shall be very much obliged. We shall keep the other one for Mr. Davis when he calls, and we shall also give him the station agent's affidavit as to the condition of the biscuits when received.

These are openings of adjustment letters that brought about amicable understandings and retained business (see pages 332 to 341):

- Your account will be credited with the amount of purchase price immediately you return the goods to us.
- Your order has been revised as you wish, and the merchandise will be delivered to you by special messenger tomorrow.
- Shirts of correct size and quality go to you from our shop immediately by special delivery.
- You were altogether right in refusing to receive the merchandise.
- You have us entirely at your mercy, and we shall accept any suggestion you may care to make toward an entirely satisfactory adjustment.
- The delay in delivering your merchandise is very much regretted by us. You have every right to complain.
- We are very sorry indeed that you found the merchandise to be unsatisfactory when you examined it at home.
- Of course we want nothing so much as a fair and agreeable adjustment of this misunderstanding. Won't you please let us know just when it will be suitable for you to make an appointment with our manager?
- Won't you please reconsider the withdrawal of your subscription, and let us try to get you more desirable seats for the season?
- Please send the goods at our expense to our nearest branch, and we guarantee that satisfactory replacement will be made in a few days.
- It is our mistake entirely, and we apologize. If you will have the brackets ready to be picked up tomorrow (Thursday) morning, our wagon will call with the proper ones.
- It doesn't matter at all who made the error. We are responsible in the last analysis, and we shall see to it that correction is made at once.
- Inasmuch as the goods you mention were sold at a greatly reduced price and were marked as seconds at the sale at which you bought them, we are afraid that we cannot take them back. But if you will explain in detail what the dissatisfaction is, we are sure that we shall be able to make you a satisfactory allowance on them.
- We are sorry that you are dissatisfied with the seats assigned to you for the season. Please return the tickets to us, and we shall try to improve the location for you a little later as occasional cancellations come in.
- We do not honestly feel that we can make any further concessions in the negotiation, and we hope you will agree to turn the issues over to the board of arbitration.

- You want to be fair, of course. So do we. Won't you please, therefore, indicate an arbitrator in this case, permit us to name one, and let these two select a third?

These openings have been used in successful collection letters (see pages 370 to 393):

- How about that \$28.71 that you owe us?????
- You have disappointed us—again—and—again—we are sorry!
- Your credit is still good with us—but it won't be much longer!
- Heretofore your checks have come in so punctually that we feel sure your failure to settle your May account long ago must be an oversight.
- Your remittance, please, to cover your long-overdue indebtedness? And why not immediately?
- Now please tell us just what the trouble is? Haven't we the right to know?
- You have evidently overlooked—or haven't you?—that small amount of \$41.93 that has been due us now for four months?
- Surprise is not the word for it! We are shocked and astonished—and ashamed. Your long outstanding indebtedness to us belittles US AND IT IS UNWORTHY OF YOU!
- Here's that hardware bill again—in duplicate—one copy goes to your office desk and one to your home desk. And it's going to be paid *soon*, we know!
- You know perfectly well that we cannot hold this account open indefinitely. We know that we have no intention of doing so!
- To continue the story of that \$158.10 that you have been owing us for—all too long! But please don't wait for the sequences for there's going to be a flash-back or a flash-out very, very soon now!
- You have not replied to our appeals which we have certainly kept patient at the cost of great restraint. Now just listen to this:
- Our creditors are pressing us. We must press you. And we are pretty sure that you will yield to the particular kind of pressure that we shall certainly bring to bear if that bill is not met by ———.
- We have written you letters. We have sent you telegrams. We have telephoned you. We have sent personal representatives to see you. We are now going to sue—not because we wish to but because there seems to be no other way.
- Unless you pay us what you owe us by ——— we shall turn over to our attorneys, ———, of ———, all the papers concerned in the case of your indebtedness to us which, we cannot help feeling by this time, you would rather not pay!

The following openings have been taken from successful sales letters (see pages 398 to 441):

- Have you tried the new velvet blade?
- You may save time, money, and energy.
- Today is yours—tomorrow may not be.
- I met a friend of yours the other day.
- For you this month may be the test month.
- Haven't you often wished you could save more?
- You were looking in our window the other day.
- Was that you looking in our window the other day?
- You want to provide for the family, don't you?
- You are improving all the time. But are we all?
- Will you please allow me to discuss this with you?
- You will say that you have rarely seen such values.
- That new home of yours—how are you going to heat it?
- Your clothes are always in the best of taste and you wear them with distinction.
- Use the enclosed sample at once *please*. Then form your own conclusions. We have no fears about your impression.
- At the request of one of your neighbors we are sending you a few samples of our very latest ——— which, we hope, will be of interest to you.
- Under other cover our very latest patterns are sent to you today, and we call your attention to the following points of special interest and value.
- If you will be so good as to make the mark required on the enclosed prepaid card and mail it to us this day, you will receive a sample of that ——— that is revolutionizing the market.
- In order that our pleasant business relationship may be continued and expanded, we are calling your attention to the following unusual offerings.
- Your interest in cooking utensilry will be increased a hundred-fold once you have sampled our Dime-Thin-Steel cookers. May we send you one item on approval?

- Won't you please examine the enclosed samples and price quotations, and tell us frankly whether you have ever met their equal anywhere in the merchandising field?
- The extraordinary quality stocks of ——— and Company have just been taken over by us, and we are giving our old friends first option on them. Here are a few of the thrilling values:
- Suitings for the new season have just come in, and we are giving you first opportunity to see and feel some of the most attractive fabrics it has ever been our privilege to show you.
- Have you tried the new breakfast food *Wheatery-Wheat*? If not, call ———, reversing charges, and you shall have such a breakfast tomorrow as you may never have had before.

Such openings as these should be studiously avoided, especially in sales letters (see pages 111, 116, and 126).

We beg to say
Just a moment
Never say die
We would state
Attached hereto
We would advise
In regard to the
We take pleasure
We beg to inform
Enclosed herewith
In reply would say
Permit us to advise
Enclosed please find
In the month of June
You are losing money
Don't miss this offer
Replying to your favor
Esteemed favor at hand
Wake up—Spring's here

Can we interest you in
\$5,000,000.—that's us!
You're the people for me
In compliance with yours
Just leave everything to us
And now, Old Boy, loosen up!
I take pleasure in informing
Regarding your communication
Contents of yours duly noted
Yours of recent date at hand
We are pleased to inform you
Let me call your attention to
Pursuant to yours of even date
I'm the man you're looking for
Can't you afford to own a car?
Here's something good—for you
I look at this—I look at that—
It is our understanding that—
Yours of 15 inst. has come to hand

This letter will be your salvation
May I be permitted to interest you in?
Suppose you hadn't a cent in the world!
Here's the biggest chance you ever had
Yes, sir. We're the people. Congratulate us.
Don't expect to succeed unless you own a ———

It is better to hold to the established, conventional forms of salutation. Such vivacious salutations as the following may damage otherwise good letters (see page 243):

My Boy
Howdy, Friend
Morning, Partner
Good morning, Mr. Ferguson
Dear old Hoosier
Here's to you, Mr. Ferguson

My canny Comrade
Dear Kind Lady!
Sweet old Thing!
You Old-Timer
Paging Mr. Ferguson
Mr. Ferguson, please

CLOSING

Final impressions are also lasting. It is important to make the closing of a letter objective, direct, engaging, forceful, and impressive. Too often the closing of a business letter is either a repetition of something preceding—of the opening, it may be—or a conventional well-wishing phrase or sentence. The full and decisive stop, short of abruptness, of course, is desirable at the end of a letter, either business or friendly. The closing should likewise be specific, whether it is a statement or a question or a courteous command or an appeal. It should in other words be

THIS

a definite statement
a definite question
a definite but courteous command
a definite appeal or suggestion for action

NOT THIS

an abrupt word, phrase, or sentence
a "smart" or freakish or aggressive expression
a hackneyed form or phrase
a participial phrase

These are good definite closings:

- If you want more washers for the tubing, please say the word.
- Please give us a complete report, and we shall probably be able to help.
- You are to be congratulated on the showing you have made for the firm.
- Thank you for letting us know about this. We shall go to work on it at once.

Sometimes, as in the opening of a letter, brevity by way of a word or two is excellent as a closing. But the stereotyped *and oblige*, *we are*, *we remain*, and other expressions of their ilk, are not used in the best letter composition. This means that the participial phrase that as a rule anticipates such time-worn terms, is also definitely ruled out of letter closings. Some, even, of the most distinguished of writers have been known to lapse into the dangling-participle error at the end of a letter. The participial construction needs to be watched carefully wherever it is used. It is used with greatest risks at the beginning and at the ending of letters.

Assuring
Hoping
Thanking
Trusting
Urging
Wishing

} you

Anticipating
Appreciating
Awaiting
Desiring
Expecting
Soliciting

} your

are all stereotyped participial closings or participial "getaways," as they are called in some offices. If the cliché must creep into

letters now and again, by all means keep it out of the first sentence and the last. In closing your letter let nothing interfere with your conveying to the reader exactly what it is your intention to accomplish by the letter. He is to do something or you are to do something or a third person is to do something, or the letter probably would not have been written. Leave this definitely before him as you close. Do not smother it with participial and hackneyed balderdash. Close as you begin, conversationally. You do not say to any one when you meet him, "I beg to let you know that I am well and hope you are the same," or when you leave him "Assuring you of my very best wishes at all times and trusting that the cooperative relationship existing between us may be continued, I remain." Such goose-quill interchange of civility would be almost insulting in face-to-face conversation. It is quite the same, if not worse, in the written conversation of letter composition. It should be clear, therefore, why your letter closing should be

THIS

As soon as we hear from you we shall ship the goods.

Depend upon us to help in this campaign of yours.

Will you please give Mr. Davis a hearing when he calls next week?

Do you think you can get the first carton to us by the end of this week?

Your prompt reply will enable us to make delivery as and when you indicate.

Thanks. You've been a real help.

NOT THIS

Awaiting your detailed explanation as to just how you wish the goods shipped, and assuring you of our best services at all times, we are

Extending to you our every assurance of cooperation in the worthy campaign you are making, and wishing you all success,

Trusting that you will oblige by making the desired appointment with our Mr. Davis next week when he is in ———, we beg to remain,

It is our sincere hope that you will find it possible to get the first of the cartons to us by the end of the week, and oblige

Assuring you of our every effort to serve you in this matter to your complete and entire satisfaction, your prompt reply to our queries is eagerly awaited.

May we express our heartfelt thanks for your helpfulness in the situation, and assuring you of our continued happiness in our congenial business relationships, we are

The closings that follow, like the openings on page 183, are "taken from the life," and are presented with the same caution. By no means the least that may be said for them is that they "commit" no participial persiflage. These, too, should be compared with the closings of letters reproduced elsewhere in this book, and should be considered with the foregoing exposition in mind.

Good closings from friendly letters by literary persons (see pages 1 to 110):

- And so it goes on.—Thomas Carlyle
- Thank you for liking my play.—Charles Lamb
- Do help us by a word every now and then.—Robert Browning
- Now dinner's ready and I must say good-bye.—Alfred Tennyson
- I have now let it all out and I feel a great deal better.—Frederick Marryat
- Friendly regards to all friends there from all friends here.—James Thomson
- God bless you, dear Barbara. You are very precious to us.—George Eliot
- For God's sake send me some gilt. I am terribly hard up just now.
—Charles Lever
- I have not left room to subscribe myself more than
Affectionately yours,
William Wordsworth
- When will you write? On Tuesday, at farthest. God Bless you ever!—Jane Welsh Carlyle
- God bless you, and I hope June will find you well and bring us together.—Jane Austen
- The great evils one triumphs over bravely, but the little eat one's heart away.—Jane Welsh Carlyle
- Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.—Abraham Lincoln
- Tomorrow between two and five think of me at the Princess's, with Lucy, Budge, and Mrs. Tuffin.—Matthew Arnold
- And I think this is nearly all I have to say that you would care to read—and to answer briefly—as you will?—Edward Fitz-Gerald
- To fill up my letter I send you a sonnet of Charles Lamb's—"Leisure"—out of his *Album Verses*—please to like it.—Edward Fitz-Gerald

- Which is all I remember at present necessary to lengthen this trouble, from, sir, your most humble and obedient servant.—William Temple
- You fancy we envy you, but you are mistaken; we envy those you are with, for we cannot envy the man we love. Adieu.—John Gay
- When I consider how many noble and estimable men, how many lovely and agreeable women, I have outlived among my friends and acquaintances, methinks it looks impertinent for me to be alive.—William Temple
- God bless you and yours, and good-bye! I drop these few lines as in a bottle from a ship water-logged, and on the brink of foundering, being in the last stage of dropsical debility; but though suffering in body serene in mind. So without reversing my union-jack, I await my last lurch. Till which, believe me, dear Moir,—Thomas Hood

A postscript is a natural conversational afterthought or parenthesis—an epistolary appendix that very often adds a spice and a piquancy to what might otherwise be a rather commonplace communication. Postscripts are in-character additions or personality parentheses that may be as engaging as they are apt to be incoherent, as witness:

- Should you see “Hood’s Own” advertised in any of your northern papers, it is not my wife but the re-issue of *The Comic*.—Thomas Hood
- We forgot my birthday on the twenty-third, so are keeping it today *ex post facto*, but not completely as usual, for I had no artillery to discharge at one o’clock.—Thomas Hood
- Could not you and I contrive to meet this summer? Could you not take a run here alone?—Lord Byron
- Here as in Greece they strew flowers on the tombs. I saw a quantity of rose-leaves, and entire roses, scattered over the graves at Ferrara. It has the most pleasing effect you can imagine.—Lord Byron
- Marianne sends you a thousand loves, and longs, with myself, to try whether we can say or do one thing that can enable you and Mrs. Williams to bear up a little better. But we rely on your great strength of mind.—Leigh Hunt
- Don’t forget my godson. You could not have fixed upon a fitter porter for his sins than I, being used to carry double without inconvenience.—Lord Byron
- Pray how does poor Temple find himself in his new situation? Is Lord Lisburne as good as his letters were? What has come of the father and brother? Have you seen Mason?—Thomas Gray

- Have you got the new little dog? I have a whistle for him.—Jane Welsh Carlyle
- That the view I give of myself may be complete I add the two following items—that I am in debt to nobody and that I grow fat.—William Cowper
- When I concluded doubtless you did think me right, as well you might, in saying what I said of Scott; and then it was true, but now it is due to him to note, that since I wrote, himself and he has visited me.—William Cowper
- I made a good joke: We had struggled up a steep mountain, and I rested at a tree, and asked why it was like a hospital counterpane. They gave it up, with abuse. "Because it's on top of the 'ill.'" Wit, you see, does not depend upon locality.—Shirley Brooks

These closings have been used in successful letters of application (see pages 294 to 303):

- I can easily make it possible to call at your convenience.
- You may call me at Orchard 5-7100 or address me at 840 Severance Avenue at any time.
- My telephone is Main 1756; my address, 310 West State Street. I am at liberty to call at your office at any time.
- I shall appreciate an opportunity to talk with you personally, and can arrange to do so at any time at your convenience.
- If you don't mind, I should like an opportunity to present further recommendations to you in person?
- If you are interested in the foregoing statements—and I hope you are—I shall welcome an opportunity for a personal interview at any time convenient to you.
- Tho I am at present employed, I am nevertheless desirous of making the larger and more promising connection that your advertisement offers.
- Will you please consider these facts about me and my work in connection with the position, and let me come in to present still others and to talk with you?
- I shall be very much obliged to you for weighing these qualifications of mine in relation to the position that you have to offer. And may I venture to express the hope that you will consider them favorably?
- May I please look forward to a telephone call (State 7743) or to a letter (452 Haverford Avenue) summoning me to a personal interview? I am free for such appointment at any time most convenient to you.

What is said on page 186 regarding claim openings applies equally to claim closings. The following are worthy of study and comparison (see also pages 332 to 341):

- Row G—two on the aisle! Nothing else will placate me—unless it be Row B!
- Will you please help me to help my customers by making adjustment at once? Thank you.
- Call me unreasonable if you like, but I must have the other sizes by noon tomorrow!
- I shall be glad to receive your representative personally in regard to this adjustment. He will find me at my office during business hours every day next week.
- An official referee will be most agreeable to me in this case provided he is selected by mutual consent.
- Sorry. I shall have to have the copper as ordered. I'll take the responsibility. The important thing is to get it to me just as soon as you possibly can.
- Will you please make this exchange at once without awaiting receipt of returned goods?
- I am leaving tomorrow on the Twentieth-Century Limited—car 816, stateroom B, in case you cannot get them to my apartment by three p. m.
- Much may be said on both sides, I know, and I'll take all the blame for fussiness. But tomorrow—by noon—PLEASII:?
- I may be unreasonable, as you so trenchantly imply. But I'm the customer, and the customer is always right, isn't he?

These closings have been clipped from successful adjustment letters written on a wide variety of business subject-matter (see pages 332 to 341):

- We shall try to do better—much better—in the future.
- You have been most patient and considerate, and we thank you.
- We are more than anxious to make complete amends for all the annoyance we have caused you.
- A generous allowance will, of course, be made to you for the loss you have suffered.
- The foregoing will prove to you, we hope, that we desire to be absolutely fair in this unfortunate situation.
- Needless to say that we are more than sorry that you have been put to all of this unnecessary inconvenience.

- The carriage charges to and from are, we repeat, to be borne by us.
- This arrangement will, we trust, atone in some small way for the great embarrassment we have caused you.
- Please write us fully as to what adjustment will be satisfactory to you, and rest assured that we shall meet you.
- Return them to us at once, at our expense, of course, and let us have your measurements on the enclosed prepaid card.
- If these also are in bad condition when they reach you, please wire us collect and we shall try again.
- May we ask your patience and cooperation for just a day or two longer until we hear from our factory?
- We wish all customers were as kind and considerate with our occasional inadequacies as you have been. Thank you.
- The factory has been instructed to send you a new shipment without awaiting return of the defective goods.
- You are entitled to a gold medal for the sporting attitude you have shown toward this bungling of ours.
- Won't you please drop in on your way to or from work? After all, there's nothing quite so tonic as a good heart-to-heart talk, is there?

The following sentences have been used either as openings or as closings in good credit letters. The inductive credit letter makes the decision for the inquirer at the end after analysis has been presented; the deductive credit letter makes decision in the very first sentence, and then presents the details that justify it. The latter is the preferable method (see pages 348-366, 400).

- Our advice is to collect if possible what the firm now owes you, and to deal in the future on a strictly cash basis.
- You will probably do well to limit your credit extension with this house to the sum of one thousand or fifteen hundred dollars for not longer than two months on each transaction.
- We think that you should at present limit your credit with the gentleman under consideration to not more than six hundred dollars on ninety-day periods.
- You may quite safely, we think, extend credit to the company for the amount mentioned, and just at present for much more than that.
- Up to a year ago we allowed them credit for five thousand dollars on ninety days, but recently we have reduced both the amount and the time by one half inasmuch as there have been changes in their personnel and their business has fallen off during the past year and a half.

- This is but the beginning, we hope, of a friendly business relationship that will continue for many years.
- We are sorry that our report cannot be more favorable. If after a later analysis we find ourselves able to report them more satisfactory we shall certainly do so.
- On the sheet* attached to this you will find a complete statement of the present financial condition of the company you inquire about. As is usually the case, figures speak for themselves and afford reliable guidance for future dealings.
- The house has met with serious reverses during the past eighteen months, and our advice in consequence is to limit your dealings with it to a strictly cash arrangement.
- The company you refer to has only recently opened here, and it has therefore not yet had time to build a business reputation in this community. All we can say at present is that it appears to have ample resources for the extensive undertakings it is planning.
- They enjoy almost unlimited credit in this city, and we think you may undertake a credit arrangement with them such as you mention in your letter, and, indeed, even a more generous one.
- Just at present the concern about which you make inquiry is facing unusually severe competition, but it seems to be doing so most creditably to itself and to the community. We think you will be quite safe to trust it to the limited extent you specify.
- Their financial condition is at this time reported as most unsatisfactory and we advise you to limit your dealings with them to a strictly cash basis.
- Thank you for your kind offer to pay us for this credit service. The expense of the investigation has been negligible, and our happiness in being of service to you is ample reward.
- This represents the extent of our knowledge of their assets and liabilities, and of their business practice and reputation. We hope it will be helpful to you, to some extent at least, in making decision about extending credit privilege to them

The following are collection closings that have been successful. A study of the chart, on page 378, will make clear that as letters advance in collection series their tone necessarily becomes more and more insistent and uncompromising.

- Please?
- We urge upon you the importance of a prompt reply.
- Please do it this day—this minute—this instant!!! Thank you.
- Your check for at least a part of the amount is confidently expected by return mail.

- It is so easy just to tuck a check (or a bill) into the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.
- Your check for the full amount should be on my desk tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.
- Please tell us promptly and confidentially why you do not pay? You will find us not only sympathetic but helpful.
- We are always willing to meet a fellow more than half way. Indeed, we have already done more than this in your case, haven't we?
- We honestly hate to be a bother and a nuisance about so small an amount as fifty dollars. But, frankly now, who is really to blame?
- And all of the foregoing would be negligible if your character and credit reputation were not so seriously at stake. Would you make so great a sacrifice for so small an amount?
- So this is the story as it is revealed by our books. Does it impress you as being a true account? If so, then you will please write the climax, and at once. Otherwise . . . ?
- The enclosed stamped addressed envelope will enable you to make payment directly to the undersigned, and thus conclude a negotiation that, left open, forebodes embarrassing developments for both yourself and the house.
- Really, you know, you can't win! You own property. You have respectability and high reputation. Are you willing to gamble with these precious things?
- This indebtedness cannot be permitted to run a day longer, and it is only fair to tell you that we mean to see that it doesn't.
- There remains now only one other way. You know what it is. Don't oblige us to name it, much less to take it.
- And so—we have struck out! In a day or two you will hear by letter, by telephone, or *in person* from our attorneys.

Sales letter closings that have helped to sell goods (see pages 398 to 441):

- Rest assured of our promptness in filling any orders you may care to place.
- We should like this to be the beginning of a series of satisfactory sales to you.
- These are but a few of the many special offerings we shall be able to make you during this and other seasons.
- If you are interested in these goods and terms of sale, will you please let us hear from you before the fifteenth of the month?
- Our catalog is enclosed, and a supplement to it now in press will be mailed to you in a few days.

- Always more eager for a select clientele than for large profits, we are consistently able to supply you with these goods at a somewhat lower figure than you customarily expect.
- Inasmuch as our stocks are now running extremely low and we do not care to replenish till next season, we shall be appreciative of your prompt acceptance of any of the above offers.
- In case these samples do not represent just what you are looking for, please inform us by means of the enclosed prepaid card and we shall be happy to send additional ones.
- The exceptional quality of these goods and the nominal price that we have indicated, will tempt you, we hope, to place your order with us at once?
- Inasmuch as these patterns are in great demand and our stock is limited, we hope you will fill in the enclosed telegram and send it to us collect, in case you are interested.
- You have nothing whatever to lose—perhaps much to gain—by using the enclosed card.
- What colors shall we send you on approval? Check on the enclosed slip.
- The stamped, addressed envelope will be convenient for you.
- Please notify us at once in case we can be of the slightest service to you in using your new ———.
- No obligation whatever. If there were we should not be so insistent.
- Just sign and mail the enclosed card, and a sample of the genuine fabric will be sent to you.
- Please use the enclosed measuring card, and you'll be delighted, we think, with our follow-up.
- Your investigation of our ——— is all we ask. Please feel free to come in at any time to ask for a demonstration.
- This discount will be given on all orders received on or before May fifteenth.
- Please let us know what additional information we may supply in order to help you in this undertaking.
- Won't you please use the enclosed prepaid card to tell us when we may send our man to see you at the least inconvenience to you?

Here are a few sales-letter postscripts or asterisked notes that have proved profitable:

- The enclosed card requires but a single stroke of your pen. It is addressed and stamped, and practically on its way back to us, isn't it?

- No matter what people say, you must come in to examine these fabrics for yourself. Then you'll know at first-hand that what we say about them is right.
- Hope springs eternal! We are pretty sure you will write *yes* here and now. Please?
- We'll arrange a special display just for you if you will let us have about an hour's advance notice.
- Pardon the afterthought: We forgot to mention that the sale has been extended to June sixth—one week from the day you receive this letter.
- The little calendar enclosed is something new under the sun. Our sales dates are appropriately illuminated. Will you please use it to our mutual advantage?
- Incidentally we are enclosing a few samples of those Far Eastern Silks you've probably been hearing about.
- We thought perhaps you might like the enclosed monthly date card. You can use both sides, and then wash them clean and begin all over again.

Such closings as these are never used in the best "letter circles" (see pages 111, 116, and 126):

Do it now
And oblige
Beg to remain
Don't pass this up
Say it with a check—now
Just sign on the dotted line
Awaiting your further orders
Do it now—or you'll get left!
Fall in line. Don't be a piker
Try everything once—or twice
Trusting this will be satisfactory
Yours for service and satisfaction
Assuring you of our best attentions
Under other cover you are receiving
Standing ready to serve you further
Yours for half price while they last
Don't pass up this great opportunity
Hoping this meets with your approval
Please use the enclosed card at once
Trust us to trust you, and order now
Urging you not to pass this chance up
Hoping that you will not delay longer
Anticipating your order by return mail
Thanking you in advance for your order
You'll be sorry if you don't fill in now
Gobble them up now or it will be too late
Trusting that you will not delay ordering
Better order one of these—while they last

We are in your humble and obedient service
 You may go further but you cannot do better
 Let us save you all this trouble and expense
 Thanks for the privilege of thus addressing you
 Looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you on
 Regretting our inability to talk with you personally
 Assuming this will meet with your entire satisfaction
 Use the enclosed card before you swivel an eighth of an inch
 Regretting the oversight and the inconvenience thus entailed
 Expecting to receive your order, no unforeseen circumstances preventing
 Assuring you that you will make no mistake in placing your order promptly
 Wishing you the best of success with our new machine which you are about to order

Such smart-alec complimentary closings as these do more harm than good (see page 246):

Yours for pepping up the works
 Yours for the bally-hoo
 Yours a million
 Dynamically yours
 Flabbergastedly yours
 Sellingly yours
 Duly yours
 Doughmatically yours
 Boodle-doodedly yours

CHARACTER

Practically everybody writes business letters. Persons directly engaged in business pursuits write more than, for instance, professional workers do. But it is a common mistake to think of business letter writing as something that concerns the business man and woman only. Practically everybody receives business letters, too. Those directly engaged in business receive more than others, to be sure. But those not so engaged are very often the severest—that is to say, the most helpful—critics of business letter composition. They know what business letters should not be, as result of receiving so many bad ones!

Ask the farmer, the factory worker, "the doctor, the lawyer, the Indian chief" what's wrong with many or most of the business letters they receive, and the reply in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred will be, "Oh, they're all alike—they just lack character, that's all." This means, as pointed out in chapter one, that they lack personality, individuality, impressiveness. What to do? Well, it will bear repeating (see page 2) that the business letter

writer must make something of himself before he can make anything of his letters. He must study hard, read widely, learn to think constructively and logically, and practice eternally.

No deliberate adoption of some peculiarity in format or expression, no veneer of eccentricity, no seeming quality of unusualness, will do the trick. Disguise never conceals the truth for any length of time. Expensive stationery and artistic engraving will not of themselves yield character to a letter. Perfection in such elements and qualities as have been treated in the foregoing pages will not in themselves give a letter character. The manifestation of good will and sympathetic understanding, tho most important in every letter, is yet not enough to guarantee the quality of character in a letter.

Character is to a letter what style is to literature in general. If style is the man, so too, then, is character. The uninteresting and unimpressive letter in all probability reflects the uninteresting and unimpressive person by whom it was written. The letter of distinguished quality, tho it be far from perfect, judged by standards of writing, reflects the individual character behind it. He may be as crude in mere externalities as a Krueger or a Rhodes, the sparkle of the diamond nevertheless shines thru. There can be no difficulty in telling which of these two letters reveals at least a degree of character:

Characterful:

Have you any idea, I wonder, how easy it is to put a thing aside, for just two minutes, and then forget all about it?

You haven't, I'm pretty sure. But I have! I had just finished reading your letter of the third, when the telephone rang. I put the letter down and took the receiver. That was the end!

Having a single-track, narrow-gauge mind I forgot all about your request until this minute when your second letter came.

I am very sorry. Will you please forgive me?

Certainly, I'll be glad to come to the luncheon on Thursday the fifteenth and to tell the men all I know about those pumps. It isn't much and it won't take long. But such as it is, you're more than welcome to it—especially after this *faux pas* of mine.

Characterless:

Thanking you for your esteemed favor of March third, wish to say I shall be happy to comply with your much appreciated request.

Regretting the delay of this reply owing to circumstances over which I had no control, beg to remain

The quality of character may perhaps be somewhat more easily achieved in business letters than in friendly. Collective corporate

agencies may build deliberately for it; individuals may rarely do so successfully. The word *character*, however, does not mean quite the same, used in relation to a firm as used in relation to a human being. Certain outward manifestations naturally identify themselves with the former, whereas this may by no means always be the case with the latter. Many business houses have been able to convey thru their letters very definite corporate character. This has been achieved not so much by the adoption of characterful stationery and letter form as by distinctive letter tone and composition. In all such firms this evolution—this revolution—has been most largely the result of the good personal administrative work done by a person employed exclusively for the purpose of improving their letter writing, for the purpose of endowing it, if possible, with character.

This person has been and still is variously called correspondence editor, correspondence engineer, correspondence supervisor, correspondence director, correspondence chief, correspondence critic, correspondence manager, office director, office supervisor, office manager. The name does not matter. His accomplishment does, for during the past decade or more it has been little short of miraculous, not only in those houses where he has done and is doing his work but in those others unprovided with such an officer *per se* but nevertheless influenced by the letters that they receive from his trained forces. In all too many large concerns even yet letter writing is everybody's business, that is, nobody's business, and the letter output is accordingly unstandardized if not undisciplined.

It may be truly said that the work of the correspondence supervisor is without end or limit. Not only is it never, never done, it is expansively continuous, always offering new problems, always presenting different opportunities, always challenging his education and his native intelligence and diplomacy. A few of his activities are here indicated, but any mere listing of them must be regarded as most general inasmuch as every individual business has correspondence questions all of its own that defy specific cataloging:

He establishes standards for house letters—standards in form, quality, tone, policy, as well as in such details as spelling, punctuation, grammar, English usage in general—so that the letters written in one department will be uniform with those written in another and not appear to have issued from an entirely different firm.

He prepares a house manual of style, covering the points above mentioned; presenting model letters from every department of the business;

explaining the use and care of correspondence machines; instructing stenographers, typists, secretaries, and all others connected with letter writing, in those details about letter composition that will tend to "lift" the letter output of the firm above the average level.

He inspires company pride and *esprit de corps* in regard to letter writing far beyond the mere offices where letters are dictated and written; he does this by initiating contests, by calling in good talkers for selected groups, by holding letter-reading meetings whereat discussion is kept lively and votes are taken, by insisting to the managers and executives of the firm that promotions in certain departments be based to some extent—to a great extent, it may be—upon an employee's letter writing, use of English, and general better-letter consciousness.

He trains new employees, constantly "jacks up" old ones, conducts classes, visits correspondence rooms, listens to dictation whether direct or thru machine, issues periodical bulletins on which he lists errors heard and seen during his rounds of a day or a week, focuses individual instruction upon such employees as have stubborn difficulties with this problem or that in English, in typing, in meeting letter situations, and in adaptation to policies of standardization.

He trains employers too, and if any one of his numerous jobs may be designated as "hardest" this is probably the one. He has been known, however, to improve dictation habits to such a degree that letter correction after typing, with the irksome retyping it invariably incurs, has been eliminated entirely. (He has been known to instruct stenographers to remove cigars and cigarettes from a dictator's desk before dictation is started, but this may be a somewhat too radical instruction to formulate as a recommendation.)

He acts in an advisory capacity in connection with all house printing and publishing—letterheads, interim reports, catalogs, direct-mail matter and general advertising copy, booklets of directions for all groups of employees, house organ. In smaller establishments he may be made head of publications and editor of the house organ, but in larger ones it is obvious that such assignment would be unjust unless he were provided with an able corps of assistants.

He organizes and conducts (or has conducted) a correspondence library wherein are to be found books on letter writing (including anthologies), on English composition, on advertising copy, and on more general subjects, as well as frequently refreshed displays of model letters from all parts of the world and on all subjects. In some firms he has made of such library a meeting place for employee letter clubs and committee symposiums.

He economizes for the firm, first, in each and every one of his activities enumerated above; second, by analyzing given difficult letter situations as they inevitably arise, and by himself or, preferably, as chairman of a committee, working out solutions that economize by way of reducing correspondence. If his firm is one that makes use of correspondence forms, he has almost infinite opportunity to economize for it not only in their original devising but in their frequent revision and out-and-out renewal.

Even from this very sketchy enumeration it must be evident that the correspondence supervisor has unlimited work to do as well as unparalleled opportunity to build for house character in letter composition. And this is primarily his job. If all of his manifold activities do not total characterful letters, then he fails. But experience shows that the correspondence supervisor does not, as a rule, fail; that in those houses where he has been assigned and where he has been given free hand, he succeeds with enviable distinction for his concern as well as for himself.

The following paragraphs are excerpted from the correspondence manual of a business concern that has made a nation-wide reputation for its excellent letters. The general tonic effect of such appeals as these upon a corps of letter writers is incalculable. On the opposite page is a sample form of letter from the same manual. The omission of salutation and complimentary closing is commendable and noteworthy. This concern has the courage of its convictions in regard to these two letter parts. Other companies have from time to time attempted this reform, but most of them have failed to carry thru.³ (See pages 123, 124, 236, and 243.)

Always write with the reader in mind. Try to picture him as he reads your letter. Forget that you are writing, and talk to him. Aim to produce the same effect on him as a conversation would, only bear in mind that this must be done by using about one-fifth the number of words.

Strive to write so that there is no possibility of being misunderstood. Always use such words, sentences, and paragraphs as will make the very best impression on the reader. The tone of letters should always be friendly, and this necessitates a pleasant frame of mind on the part of the dictator.

A letter must be clear, courteous, and concise. The statements must be absolutely correct and the character of the organization must be clearly evidenced throughout its every line and paragraph. These principles are necessary to a complete letter. They should be borne in mind in all writing.

A letter must be immediately clear to the reader. If it is necessary for him to stop to decipher any passage because it is vague or obscure, the letter has violated the first principle.

To force a reader to study our letters in order to understand what is meant, will not add anything to the good feeling which he has for us. In addition, there is the danger that he may take the wrong meaning and that a misunderstanding may result. Misunderstandings do not promote good will. Often they lead to ill-feeling and.

³ Used by permission of the Norton Company, Worcester, Massachusetts.

NORTON COMPANY**GRINDING WHEELS AND GRINDING MACHINES**

MAIN OFFICES AND WORKS WORCESTER, MASS

WORCESTER, MASS. July 13, 0000

John Doe and Company
1260 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts

Attention of Mr. J. E. Doe

**Standard Form of
Outside Letter**

This letter is written in accordance with the standard form adopted for all Norton letters.

The date should be written at 53 on the scale on the line with the city and state. The paper guide should be placed so that when the paper is inserted in the machine and the marginal stop set at 10, the left-hand margin will be $1\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. The address should contain at least three lines and the subject heading should be written six single spaces below the last line of the address.

The first line of the body of the letter should be written one double space below the last line of the subject. All paragraphs should begin at 20 on the scale. The right-hand margin should be as even as possible and should be approximately $1\frac{1}{4}$ " wide.

The signature NORTON COMPANY should be written one double space below the last line of the body of the letter and at 43 on the scale. The department name should be written at 44 and one single space below the signature NORTON COMPANY. If a title is used it should be written three single spaces below the signature. If Grinding Machine (or Abrasive) Division is used in the signature it should be written one space below the signature NORTON. COMPANY and at 44 on the scale, the department name or title following in the usual form.

The initials and last name of the dictator should always be in line with the department name or the title, depending upon which one is used. There should be one space left after the period following each initial of the name.

NORTON COMPANY

(Name)

Office Manager

in the end, to loss of business and, consequently, of money. It pays to be clear.

Long sentences are often responsible for involved expressions. Avoid the long sentence. In this attempt be careful not to construct sentences that are too short, for a series of short sentences gives the impression of curtness. Choose the moderately long sentence. Cultivate the style which makes use of both the short and the moderately long sentence.

Your meaning will not be misunderstood if you employ common everyday English. The simple words used in conversation in the shop and on the street are best. They are most easily understood. This kind of language will be understood by the highly educated man. It is necessary for the average person.

Below are two excerpts taken from the *Letter Writing Manual* of another large business concern famous for the high quality of its letter output. These are typical of the general content of the book issued for the purpose of helping every one in the firm who has to do with correspondence, especially stenographers and typists: ⁴

The paragraph is designed to make the task of reading easier by affording resting places for the eye and the mind.

Short paragraphs are more inviting in appearance than long ones, and they reveal their meaning more easily and more quickly.

In certain cases long paragraphs may be found more suitable than short ones, as, for instance, in letters that attempt to adjust claims and in those that are required to present lengthy explanations.

A paragraph should contain a central idea together with the details that help to develop that idea. The process of paragraphing classifies the writer's thoughts; it is therefore a functioning of judgment rather than an observance of exact rule. The judgment should be that of the writer, not that of the stenographer or transcriber.

A well-planned and carefully worded letter requires an attractive form. Like the personality of a salesman in his approach, so is the appearance of an envelope and letter when it is received.

Secretaries, stenographers, and transcribers have an important part in the interpreting of the Company's policies and the selling of its

product

This lies in the proper interpretation of the dictators' thoughts so there will be no misunderstandings. Constantly strive to be of increasing help by keeping yourself informed of the Company's policies and by studying the Company's advertising and printed matter.

⁴ Used by permission of The National Cash Register Company, Dayton, Ohio.

There may be times when information entrusted to you will be of a confidential nature. Never allow such a confidence to be misplaced.

Perform your duties as rapidly as is consistent with accuracy. Use the dictionary when you are in doubt as to spelling or syllabication. Do not guess.

After writing, read your copy carefully to detect errors. If corrections are necessary, make them neatly on both original and carbons. Never permit any copy to pass on which there are strike-overs.

When submitting your work, have all attachments made and all papers arranged so that the least possible handling will be necessary by the dictator. If enclosures are required, fold them carefully and use the proper size of envelopes.

Typical of the instruction given in correspondence manuals for meeting specific letter situations is the following analysis taken from a style-book compiled by the author for the employees of a large metropolitan bank. It emphasizes one of the most important phases of letter composition, namely, construction or what the professors sometimes call *Concinnity*, the skilful putting together or adaptation of parts.

First, before you dictate a word, decide what the purpose of your letter is to be. Is an explanation required? Must you present selling points? Does a customer have to be pacified? Are there plans of some kind to be presented? Whatever it is, keep it definitely in your mind, or, better, write it out on your desk pad.

This done, it is imperative that you make a brief outline of points. These should be placed directly under your statement of the purpose of the letter. Such planning will take but a few minutes of your time, and it may later save hours for you and for the person to whom you write. It will help you to avoid incoherence and confusion in composition and to get your subject-matter unfolded in logical order.

In the third place, recall your house policy in regard to clichés, courtesy, conciseness, clearness, correctness, commencing, and closing—the Big C's of all House Letters—as discussed in the style manual.

For instance, consider the two following letters:

I return my statement for October showing a balance of \$3326.43.

You will note that there is an error in your final figures. The difference between total checks—\$5387.81—and total credits—\$8716.24—should be \$3328.43.

This may seem a triviality to you. Perhaps it is. But in looking up my statements for the past six months I find that I have been obliged to request an adjustment practically every month. The sum total of adjustment is by no means a triviality, at least from my point of view. I am astounded that a bank of your standing will allow such consecutive errors to happen. Unless you correct the

present error at once and accompany it with plausible explanation, I shall take my account to a bank that can give me less erratic service.

This letter was written by a customer whose business is well worth retaining. He has had occasion to write more than once regarding errors made by the bank in the past. His letter is not emotional. He knows what he is saying and he means it. Your purpose in answering him must be to pacify him rationally, to be sorry for what has happened, to keep his account with the bank. Further, you should try to answer him in such manner as to evoke from him grateful acknowledgment of your method of meeting his claim. This is your outline:

Purpose: Pacify customer and retain business

- 1 apologize (without conveying truckling attitude)
- 2 explain (without urging explanation as excuse)
- 3 outline rational plan for avoiding further trouble
- 4 enclose some device for making his favorable reaction certain

You have every reason, Mr. Burns, to be disgusted with our continued errors in your statements. They are by no means trivial. They are, indeed, extremely serious. And if we were in your place, we should feel exactly as you do, without the redeeming quality of patience that you so considerably evince toward us. We apologize.

The following is offered purely as explanation, not at all as an attempt to thwart the issue or to make us appear blameless:

Six months ago this bank opened an account with Mr. S. Harold Burns whose signature closely resembles yours. In listing debits and credits on monthly statements we confused your account with his. Immediately on receipt of your letter we called him up to inquire whether he had found his statements in error. His reply was trenchantly affirmative.

Inasmuch as he frequently uses his full name—Sidney Harold Burns—he has consented to use this hereafter as his official signature with us, and he has already filed with us his new signature cards. We are having new checkbooks made for him with his full name printed on every check. We do not see, therefore, how *Mr. Harold Burns* and *Mr. Sidney Harold Burns* can possibly have their names mixed up again.

Your letter has been a help to us in another way: We are attaching a Take-Notice card to all statement sheets bearing names similar to other names on our lists. We should have thought of this long ago, but we didn't think of it, and we have you to thank for a device that will undoubtedly save us future trouble.

A corrected statement of your balance is enclosed, and revision has accordingly been made in our books. Won't you please let us know at once whether it tallies with your vouchers? We enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Instead of or in addition to a formal style-book some correspondence supervisors issue periodical—weekly, biweekly, monthly—

letters or circulars that treat subjects pertaining to house correspondence. Sometimes a page or a section in the monthly house organ is allotted to them. In this way details of temporary importance may be disposed of, whereas those of permanent importance—spelling, punctuation, grammar, and the like—are treated in the regular handbook or manual. Below are seven such periodic issues, a small but typical unit of the continuous letter-writing service rendered to the correspondence departments of one of the largest and most "letter-alive" concerns in the United States: ⁵

1

THEN AND NOW

When business letters were written by hand, there developed a directness and sincerity such as we find in personal contacts.

When it required a week to get "special delivery" from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia, the writer was careful to say the essential things.

When it cost several dollars instead of a few cents to send a message, its preparation was a matter of concern.

The locomotive, the airplane, the typewriter, and the dictaphone have changed this age-old medium for human relations in business. Facilities have improved, but have our letters kept pace? What of the message itself?

This bulletin will bring you ideas of others in our organization and suggestions of authorities on letter writing.

When you dictate or receive an unusually effective letter, won't you please ask your stenographer to send a copy to the editor of *Our Letters*?

THREE IN ONE

Replies which are incomplete, indefinite, or obscure irritate and confuse the inquirer, delay progress, create distrust, and increase the volume of correspondence. Select a few general order folders; scan the correspondence concerning them, and you will find examples illustrating many, possibly all, of these statements.

Haste and inattention lead to unnecessary correspondence. Too often we fail to concentrate our attention on the questions asked us. Too often we fail to re-read the questions asked and the answers we have given to assure ourselves that those answers will not be misunderstood.

In our anxiety to facilitate our work we often, not deliberately but unconsciously, increase our labor and the labor of others. The ratio

⁵ Used by permission of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

may not be suggested in the title, but we may accept it "in principle," endeavoring to have one letter accomplish all that perhaps required three.

3

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Returns from the last bulletin generally agree with Mr. ——— that the letter selected from his incoming mail was poor. One went so far as to suggest that we should be very careful in criticizing the letters of others if we want them to overlook our own imperfections. These bulletins are intended to make reciprocity on this level unnecessary.

The letter failed to get results.

The misspelled name antagonized.

An incorrect assumption discredited the whole letter.

The generalities were not convincing.

The writer didn't know his man. Instead of action he created reaction.

The better we know those to whom we write (within limits) the more effective our message may be. Analyze the next letter that comes over your desk. Whether you know the writer or not, his letter offers a convenient way to get better acquainted with him.

Is he writing to *you* or to some one in general?

Is his thinking logical, concise, and orderly?

Does he have you and your interests in mind or solely his own interests?

Does he make it plain to you why he wrote the letter?

Does he accept responsibility?

Do you trust him?

Would you like to meet him?

4

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LETTERS

We have been asked for suggestions, from the viewpoint of the district office, for creating more effective interdepartmental letters.

On receipt of the request, our first reaction was *Make the letter complete and compact*. Especially when you are dealing with orders, give all the pertinent facts in your opening letter, so that it will not be necessary to engage immediately in a series of follow-up letters to ferret out the details.

Much has been written on the subject of improving the quality of our correspondence, and if one is seriously determined to become a good correspondent, surely there is enough material at hand to teach him the necessary technique. This is a matter requiring individual application on the part of the correspondent himself. It is something that must be studied, cultivated, and developed.

In our judgment one ingredient that cannot possibly be dispensed with in forming a good letter—and one just as important in internal letters as in outside communications—is *courtesy*. This is just another name for *good manners*. No matter what else a letter has, if it fails to leave with the reader the impression of “if you please” and “thank you,” it is a poor letter. A mandatory tone in an otherwise faultless letter, even among associates or departments, regardless of comparative rank, builds a resistance, which, while perhaps not obvious, is cumulative, reacts against the writer, and hinders cooperation.

Much as we admire and strive for well-turned-out letters, we condone an occasional lapse in grammar or punctuation with much better grace than we react to a letter that impresses us as haughty or commanding, no matter how perfectly it is phrased.

5

CAN YOU IMPROVE THIS SALES LETTER?

In accordance with request of our representative, Mr. ———, we are pleased to enclose herewith a bulletin on the Westinghouse X-Ray Quadrex Generator and Westinghouse Shockproof Mobile X-Ray Unit.

We are also pleased to advise that a discount of 40% will be allowed to you on the purchase of a Westinghouse Transportable Model Ultra Short Wave Generator amounting to \$395.00. On a complete set of Soft Rubber Condenser Electrodes amounting to \$42.50 a discount of 10% will be allowed. A discount of 10% will also be allowed on a complete set of Glass Condenser Electrodes amounting to \$50.00, and on an Upright Adjustable Stand to hold Glass Condenser Electrodes amounting to \$30.00 as well as two cords to fit Glass Electrodes totalling \$6.00, a discount of 10% will be allowed.

Assuring you that we will appreciate an order for the above Unit, we are

Very truly yours,

For the best revision of the above sales letter received on or before April 30, ———, Mr. ———, Supervisor, Extension Courses, offers a course in Practical English and Effective Speech, published by the Better Speech Institute of America.

Judges, ———, Advertising Manager, and ———, Editor, Westinghouse Magazine.

6

THE WINNING SALES LETTER

More than one hundred employees submitted revisions of the sales letter published in the April 15 issue of *Our Letters*. The letter selected by the judges as the best is reproduced on the back of this bulletin, Mr. _____, of the Chicago office, author of the letter, will receive a course in Practical English and Effective Speech, published by the Better Speech Institute of America.

The prize-winning letter was selected because, in the minds of the judges, it is the most effective of those submitted, and not because it is a model letter. Mr. _____, for example, could have improved the first paragraph of his letter by eliminating the trite expression "you will find enclosed" and by combining the first and second sentences. Example: "The enclosed bulletin on the Westinghouse X-Ray Quadrex Generator and the Westinghouse Shockproof Mobile X-Ray Unit is being sent to you at the request of our representative, Mr. _____."

On the other hand, the letter is considered effective because it

immediately establishes a contact with the reader by referring to Mr. _____ and to the enclosures that have been requested

quotes net prices, thereby avoiding the necessity for the reader to figure discounts

specifically states a delivery date and quotes terms of the proposed transaction

contains a brief selling talk

keeps the negotiation active by suggesting a definite date for an interview between the prospective customer and Mr. _____

Here is the letter

You will find enclosed a bulletin on the Westinghouse X-Ray Quadrex Generator and the Westinghouse Shockproof Mobile X-Ray Unit. This is sent to you at the request of our representative, Mr. _____.

The following information gives complete details on the price of the various pieces of equipment:

Item 1. 1-Westinghouse Transportable Model Ultra Short Wave Generator.

List price each\$395.00

Discount—40%

Net price each, fob (City)\$237.00

Item 2. 1-Complete set of Soft Rubber Condenser Electrodes.

List price per set\$42.50

Discount—10%

Net price per set, fob (City)\$38.25

Item 3.	1-Complete set of Glass Condenser Electrodes.	
	List price per set	\$50.00
	Discount—10%	
	Net price per set, fob (City)	\$45.00
Item 4.	1-Upright Adjustable Stand to hold the above.	
	List price each	\$30.00
	Discount—10%	
	Net price each, fob (City)	\$27.00
Item 5.	2-Cords for Glass Electrodes.	
	List price for two	\$6.00
	Discount—10%	
	Net price for two, fob (City)	\$5.40

Shipment can be made in ten days after receipt of the order at our ——— factory.

Terms are "2% in 10 days; net in 30 days."

The relation which the various parts bear to each other will become evident to you as you review the bulletin. This apparatus, when properly installed, will provide you with a very satisfactory unit for your application and should give years of service at low maintenance cost.

Mr. ——— will be pleased to discuss this equipment further with you on Monday, April 27, if that date is convenient to you.

In the event you purchase this apparatus, we believe that you will soon become thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of your choice.

7

AVOID THE "RUBBER STAMP" PHRASES

In the submitted revisions of the sales letter published in the April 15 issue of *Our Letters*, there is a general tendency of the writers to use trite, formal, stereotyped expressions which have come down through generations of letter writers.

Here are just a few excerpts which may have been good form a century ago but which do not fit in with the more direct methods of the present.

"We are indeed pleased to acknowledge your inquiry and enclose herewith copies —"

Why complicate the start of your letter with unnecessary words?

"We are pleased to enclose herewith a bulletin —"

Would not this be better—"At the request of our representative, Mr. —, we attach a copy of our bulletin"?

"Enclosed please find bulletins —"

He will find them if they are attached.

"We take pleasure in submitting herewith a bulletin —"

A needlessly formal method of presenting a piece of sales literature.

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

The letter below is prompted by sound business judgment and the best of business intentions. But muddled English makes it illogical, incoherent, and ridiculous.

to Mrs. Abel Hankinson
102nd St. and Gregg Avenue,
New York City, N.Y.

Dear Madam:-

We take great pleasure in advising you that
a charge (acc) has at this time been opened in
your name, and I feel sure you will wish to
know all about the circumstances and conditions
appertaining thereunto:

Due to (Ogilvie and Company being required to
meet their bills promptly, you will understand,
I feel sure, that it's charge customers are ex-
pected to pay their's promptly too when presented
A self-addressed envelope accompanies every bill
that we send out (for the convenience of customers).

In the case of (special) sales (either special)
notice will be mailed (or) you will receive messages
by wire or (phone). The enclosed (identification) is
for your use and (convenience), so that no question may
arise when you make purchases (in the minds of those
of us who serve you.)

(May I) be permitted to say that we (greatly appreciate
your (patronage) and we shall do everything in our
power to gratify same to your (complete satisfaction).

Cordially yrs. etc

Manager of sales
 C. J. Ogilvie and Co

HQ/sd

This revision of the "sales-welcome" letter on the opposite page probably makes it somewhat more helpful and more impressive.

March 1, 0000

Mrs Abel Hankinson
Gregg Avenue at 102 Street
New York City

Dear Mrs Hankinson

The charge account that you wish to open with us is ready for your use. You may now make purchases at any time, say "Charge it" to the salesman, and be sure of the credit recognition desired

Enclosed is an identification card bearing your name and address and charge-order number. It also admits you to our seasonal fashion previews, to our weekly lectures in the auditorium, and to our special sales opened to charge customers before others. (We sometimes exercise the privilege of announcing such opportunities by telephone or by telegraph in case customers do not object)

An itemized statement of your purchases will be mailed to you at the close of the last business day of each month. Payment is due not later than the tenth of the following month. An addressed return envelope accompanies every bill. Under the flap of this envelope is typed the total amount of your indebtedness. This is just a check-up for our convenience, and makes it unnecessary for you to enclose the bill with your check unless additional receipt is desired

The attached diagram gives you the general layout of our shop, floor by floor. You may find it helpful at first. But we are hoping that you will soon become so well acquainted with us that no such guide will be required

Very truly yours

Harold Quickem

Harold Quickem
Manager of Sales
OGLIVIE AND COMPANY

HQ/sd

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

"We are indeed pleased to favor you with the attached bulletin ——"

Are you really favoring the prospect?

(Note the "pleased" in all of the above quotations. We want to please the customer—the feelings of the writer are of no interest to him.)

"—— and trust to be favored with your valued order"

"Hoping to be favored with your order ——"

"We shall be glad to receive your order"

These closing expressions are unnecessary. The prospect knows that you want the order. Tell him why he should place it with you.

Sometimes the writer goes a step beyond these trite phrases. For example—

"Anticipating your order, we wish to thank you"

Is not this a little presumptuous?

"We wish to thank you for this opportunity to serve and hope to continue in your favor"

Smacks of supplication. You would not say this in personal contact with the prospect.

"Your order will be appreciated and shall have preferred attention"

Will this order have preferred attention? Will not the prospect question your sincerity?

"Assuring you we are ready to serve you at all times, we are"

Superfluous statement—he knows that we must serve to remain in business.

"We are pleased to advise you that the following discounts apply on this unit:"

Why not simply—"The following discounts apply, etc."?

"We wish to advise you that the transportable model is priced at ——"

Again, too many words.

Let's avoid these superfluous and stereotyped phrases. Strive for clarity, simplicity, sincerity, and directness. While writing our letters, let's assume that we are talking to our readers.

The following scale for evaluating business letters is successfully used by many correspondence supervisors. The letter dictator and the letter writer in many an establishment keep this scale under the desk glass as constant reminder and for constant check-up: *

* Used by permission of its author, Mr. L. E. Frailey, Editorial Director, The Dartnell Corporation, Chicago, Illinois.

THE FRAILEY RATING SCALE FOR BUSINESS LETTERS

	$j = 15$	$+ = 10$	$? = 5$	$- = 0$	Points
Appearance	How well is the letter groomed? Is the letterhead attractive without being wild? Are the grammar and the punctuation correct? Does the letter sit nicely on the page? Is the typing good and free from erasures? Does the letter appeal to the eye as one easy to read?				
Language	Are the words short and natural? Would the average person know their meaning? Is the letter free from "rubber stamp" expressions? Does it carry the distinction of simplicity? Is the language the same that the writer would use if he were talking to the reader?				
Argument	Has the story in the letter been well told? Do the facts seem complete? Is all the information presented that the reader needs? Does the letter "ring true"? Does the writer seem to know what he is talking about? Does the purpose of the letter stand out sharply?				
Carpentry	What kind of craft-man does the writer prove to be? Between the lines can you see the skeleton that all good letters must have? What about the star, the chain, and the hook—are they all there? Do the paragraphs cling together? Does the story move along?				
Personality	Does the writer succeed in getting <i>himself</i> into the letter? Does he take the reader on an interesting journey? Does he get out of the rut of the commonplace? Does the letter sparkle with originality? Is the interest sustained from beginning to end?				
Spirit	Will the letter win good will for the company? Is it free from sarcasm, ridicule, anger, and bluster? Does the reader get the impression that he is being well served? Is it a letter the writer would be proud to show to the head of his company?				
Result	And now, beyond all of these six points, what general impression does the letter give? Does the writer seem to have accomplished his purpose? Does the letter <i>do the job</i> ?				
Final Rating					

Another exhibit that has come into wide general use under desk glasses, on bulletin boards, and elsewhere, is the following check-up questionnaire. It cannot be too highly recommended.⁷

CAN YOU HONESTLY SAY YES TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS AFTER YOU HAVE WRITTEN THAT LETTER?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1
Does it possess the pleasing appearance that invites a careful reading? | 11
Is the message definite and concrete? |
| 2
Is it confined to one subject, and developed logically? | 12
Does it read easily and smoothly? |
| 3
Are the paragraphs short for easy reading? | 13
Is your name typewritten below your signature? |
| 4
Are the sentences simple and easily understood? | 14
Does it have a natural and effective beginning? |
| 5
Is the date of the letter it answers given for quick reference? | 15
Does it have an agreeable and impressive closing? |
| 6
Is its message unhampered by useless and hackneyed expressions? | 16
Does it appeal to the reader's self-interest? |
| 7
Is it unencumbered by vague and ambiguous terms? | 17
Does it ring convincingly true, and hold interest? |
| 8
Are superlatives used with caution? | 18
Will it satisfy, or evoke action? |
| 9
Are adjectives used appropriately and specifically? | 19
Does it evince personal or house character? |
| 10
Are pronouns correctly used? | 20
Is it the kind of letter that you yourself would like to receive? |

Perhaps the excerpt below most clearly and most emphatically sets forth the qualities in business letters that make for character. Its somewhat brisk and vivacious style may perhaps be pardoned for the sake of its salience of content: *

Every letter a business man is called upon to write is a gilt-edged opportunity. It is nothing whatever short of this. It could not possibly be more than this. And that composer of letter literature who regards it as

⁷ Used by permission of John Howie Wright, Editor, *Postage and the Mailbag*.

⁸ From *Number Eight*, house organ of The National City Bank. Used by permission.

anything less, or as anything different, simply thereby confesses to low-powered ambitions and short-circuited ideals.

It is easy enough to get a letter commercially right, but to get it commercially righteous calls for tact, talent, and temperament. Over the desk of every stenographer in a large industrial house in the West is the following code of ten items, five mechanical and five contextual:

Thou shalt not misdate	Thou shalt not misword
Thou shalt not misaddress	Thou shalt not misstate
Thou shalt not misarrange	Thou shalt not misspell
Thou shalt not misparaphrase	Thou shalt not miscapitalize
Thou shalt not misfold	Thou shalt not mispunctuate

These are the typist's Ten Commandments, the Ten Misses Amanuenses Must Not Miss. They are the baby rules for business letter writing. They refer to the details that go to make letters *right*. They have to do merely with *things*.

But there are ten grown-up rules for business letter writing, and they have to do clearly with *things*. They are the big issues that go to make letters righteous. It is in the attainment to these that most business letter writers find the challenge for all the science and all the artistry that their cumulative culture can summon. Five are objective, focusing upon the recipient of the letter, five are subjective, placing a searching obligation upon the writer. Every recipient of a business letter has the right to expect

- A spirit of broad sympathy
- A tone of warm cordiality
- A note of positive optimism
- A feeling of good fellowship
- An undoubted you-attitude

And every writer of a business letter should feel obligated to secure to his letter composition

- An engaging style
- A sincere courtesy
- A concrete logic
- A man-to-man dignity
- A definite but unobtrusive personality

These grown-up rules, framed in gilt and illuminated by line and color, should perennially beam down from above the desk of every business letter composer. For it is only by an unequivocal effort to feature these that a letter can be made the hearty hand-shake across the eight-by-eleven bond that it should be. Business letters fail most often because of the minus attitude. And, accordingly, business letter writers fail most often because they ignore or defy or neglect or are indifferent to the expression of BIG ATTITUDE in and between and among the lines of the letters they write.

And how shall this appeal *de luxe* be achieved? Well, certainly first, by consigning the word *routine*, and its correlative *routinized*, to the place where printers send their defective type; and, second, by a pig-headed refusal to believe that there is any such thing as an *obvious* letter situation or any such weapon of letter warfare as a form album; and then—

and *then*—by the willingness and the ability on the part of the letter composer to *other* himself, to put himself in the place of the individual who is to receive his letter.

This last is the test that makes of every business letter a cross-section of business life. It is only by *othering* himself that any letter writer can enter into an honest and genuine spirit of correspondence. He must feel that he has met and that he knows the one to whom he writes. Otherwise he is helpless to make his epistolary papyrus glow and pulsate with human feeling. He may be perfect in English; he may be irrefutably convincing in logic; he may be fastidious to the point of fussiness in matters of form. But if he cannot concretize the letter situation by *othering* himself his letters will go forward (or backward) *unpepified*, *unpowergraphed*, and *unpunctuated*.

WORK

A

The following excerpts from business letters are improper in tone. Rewrite each excerpt more briefly, more objectively, more constructively. On line *a* after each, classify the letter from which the excerpt must have been taken. On line *b* write that one of the following words that seems to you to explain the tone violation in the given case—*reproachful*, *ironic*, *combative*, *belittling*, *dictatorial*, *arbitrary*, *contentious*, *libelous*, *unctuous*, *superior*, *retaliatory*, *over-confident*. There is a word for each excerpt. No word is to be repeated.

- 1 We have sent you bills, letters, and telegrams. We have even called you up on long distance. You must admit that we have done more than our share to make adjustment. It's high time for you to do yours.

a..... *b*.....

- 2 We answered your claim immediately it was received. It is certainly not our fault that you did not receive the letter. Moreover, we have sent out two tracers. It seems to us that we have gone the limit in your behalf.

a..... *b*.....

- 3 Your argument seems to us to be unreasonable and contrary to good business policy. Furthermore, you have had the goods for more than a month, and should therefore have written to us sooner. As a consequence our previous decision must stand.

a..... *b*.....

- 4 You write us that you are disappointed in profits. But you haven't tried the commodity long enough. The expert merchandiser figures profits, not on units or short-time sales, but on bulk sales and long-term showings. He doesn't quit the deal at the end of the first week and cry out loud!

a..... *b*.....

- 5 Any child can run that car. Your complaint about stiff gears is not well taken. All gears in new cars are somewhat tight at first. But the gears of every car that leaves this factory are thoroly tested for accuracy and immediacy of speed adjustments. Yours is the first complaint of the kind that we have ever had.

a..... b.....

- 6 You want to be well dressed, don't you? Everybody wants to be. Don't delay, then, about getting in here to look at our latest models. We have suitings that will make you look like a stranger to your family, give new meaning to your mirror, and put pride and confidence into your bearing.

a..... b.....

- 7 If you'll read the directions carefully you'll have no trouble at all getting the stopper out. Most of our customers make the mistake of pulling or jerking or hammering, and thus break the bottle. If they would read our explicit directions first they would know enough to give a sharp twist, and—presto—the container would be opened! Obviously we cannot hire a demonstrator to go around to our customers to make this explanation! That's why we issue the circular of directions!

a..... b.....

- 8 Give your children a real chance to be educated. Buy this set of books *now* so that the kiddies may begin today to gather those broad and general outlooks upon life and living that they must have if they are to be the cultured and liberal-minded men and women that you want them to become. Schools are not enough. You can depend upon them only so far.

a..... b.....

- 9 We warned you that you should not use Excelsior Cover on white lead. We have had forty years of experience in merchandising these paints, and by this time we know what the customer wants better than he himself knows ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. We cannot therefore shoulder the blame that you would put upon us, for your dissatisfaction with the finished job is in no sense our fault. Our only mistake was our failure to dominate the work at the outset. Had we done so, you would have been completely satisfied with it, we know.

a..... b.....

- 10 We tried very hard indeed to please you. As a matter of fact we lost money on the job just in order that everything might be as you wished it to be. We are extraordinarily sorry about the whole thing, and we sincerely hope that you will not permit your disappointment to militate against us when you have further orders to place. We left no stone unturned, you may be sure, to have the set-up and the alignment as you wanted them. But things went against us. *Please* give us another trial, and we can assure you that you will have no cause whatever for complaint.

a..... b.....

- 11 Our advice is to take it very easy when it comes to extending credit to this house. The officers have become notoriously loose in their business dealings of late, and the firm is on the verge of financial collapse. Moreover, the factory output has deteriorated to such a degree that twenty new employees have been taken into the adjustment department in order that the numerous claims made monthly by customers may be taken care of. Two members of the company have recently been up on charges in connection with misappropriation of employee fiduciary funds, and one of them has been sentenced to a term in prison. So KEEP OFF would be our policy.

a..... b

- 12 My time is approximately yours to allocate. In the eventuation of our consummating a mutually satisfactory and agreeable commercial relationship, my superior abilities will indubitably justify you in constituting me a partner in your esteemed establishment in a comparatively short period of time. Needless to say that such an affiliation will be gratifying in the extreme to all concerned. Again thanking you for this opportunity to address you, assuring you that you will make no mistake in employing one of my outstanding qualifications, and congratulating you upon the relationship that you are about to inaugurate with me for the advancement of your corporation, I have the honor and the distinction to remain . . .

a..... b.....

B

Rewrite the following excerpts, making them better. On line *a* after each write the name of the classification of business composition from which the excerpt is probably taken. On line *b* after each write that one of the following words that explains most accurately the chief fault of the excerpt. Use each word but once—*subjective, impersonal, flippant, extravagant, inferior, conceited, verbose, illiterate, domineering, aggressive*.

- 1 I don't know what to think of your silence regarding this bill. I have written you several times regarding it but I have not yet received so much as a syllable of explanation from you as to why it isn't paid. I confess that I am annoyed about it.

a..... b.....

- 2 We are of the opinion that the party referred to is not good for the amount mentioned. We should urge caution upon entering into a contractual relationship with him such as your letter indicates. We are sorry that we cannot give you a more satisfactory and encouraging report.

a..... b.....

- 3 There is no use wasting any more time about that order. It was filled immediately it was received, and sent out by special delivery. There may have been difficulty at the other end or in transit, and tracers

have been sent out to run it down. Information will be forwarded just as soon as it comes our way—if ever.

a..... *b*.....

- 4 There is no doubt about the workmanship. Every piece of steel that goes into it is thoroly tested as a single unit of metal before it is combined with any other. It is then tested anew every time it is welded with another piece of steel. And then, when the entire frame is set up finished, and ready for covering, it is *again* tested both as a unit and as a component part in relation to all other parts.

a..... *b*.....

- 5 I *know* I can do that job for you. I have done that sort of work ever since I left elementary school. I am qualified, as a matter of fact, to undertake much more important things for you, as, I am sure, my recommendations make clear. Incidentally, I took honors in both high school and college, but I am happy to say that I have never allowed my outstanding intellectual qualifications to make me conceited.

a..... *b*.....

- 6 I hope I shall not be intruding upon your valuable time in writing you to say that I think I can do the work. I sincerely trust that I may be given a trial, and, if so, I can promise you my best effort and loyalty in your services. I am willing to accept whatever wage my humble endeavors in your behalf indicate to you I should receive. I apologize for taking up so much of your time, and I again express the hope that I may be privileged to serve you.

a..... *b*.....

- 7 Here is a book of the most devastating emotional intensity. Every syllable teems with a liveliness and an interest that will absorb you completely and leave you limp from sheer joy of exhaustion in the realms of revolutionary human experience. Elusive overtones are between and among all the lines. Seductive characterization confronts you on every page. Magnificent spectacle and intriguing analysis alternate to grip and vivify your mind and heart and soul. **BUY THIS BOOK NOW** and treat yourself to an enchantment of life and living the like of which is not to be had anywhere else on this mundane sphere of existence. Witness the kaleidoscopic cavalcade of these pawns in the hands of Fate as he tosses them like a juggler thru the varied consequences of their erratic behaviorism. Fascinate your friends anew by recounting to them your reactions to these immortal pages. It is a stupendous book, a monumental literary achievement, a grand and glorious record of the tragicomedy of the human race.

a..... *b*.....

- 8 Don't kid us! The goods were sent as per, and we have the signature of your receiving clerk on our duplicate invoice. So now, who's up in the air? Next time we deliver goods to you—on time and especially packed—we'll nail 'em down right in the middle of your private office floor. Then maybe you'll be convinced you got 'em! Our pri-

vate belief is that our merchandise is so greatly in demand that it is all sold before you have time to place it on your customary shelves. The turnover is, in other words, instantaneous! Hence, the shelves are empty all the time; we are accused of not filling orders promptly; and the ever accelerated hop-skip-and-jump of KELLY'S EXCELSIOR PRODUCTS over your counters makes it *seem* as if you are always "out of them." Send us a real order next time and see how it feels to make great money!

a..... b.....

- 9 The author does not believe that these business reversals are due primarily to psychological causes, that is, to alternating errors of over-confidence and under-confidence in the business world; for he believes that "both confidence and pessimism are reactions of men's minds to objective facts" and that "it is highly paradoxical to treat the mental reactions and not the objective facts which they reflect or distort as the underlying causes of industrial progress or recession." Nor does he agree with champions of silver and certain other schools of currency reform that business depressions are directly due to falling prices and that falling prices in turn are exclusively the consequence of monetary influences. "A fall in prices," he says, "will not serve to depress trade unless prices are falling more rapidly than world productivity is increasing; and it is quite possible, if productivity is advancing fast, for a falling price-level to coexist with highly prosperous conditions in industry and commerce."

a..... b.....

- 10 Due to a change in my organization we are asking every credit customer to check their choice of the two methods of payment indicated below. It will in no way affect your standing with our firm. The present method of payment may be found just as satisfactory if not more so than these proposed new methods but my firm are desirous of getting the voice of its friends; the first line requires you to write a single word, the second that you write a figure. The self-addressed stamped envelope shall be found convenient for you immediately complying with this request. Won't you please try and come in to see my new spring offerings now on display on the "Tenth Gallery." We know that you will see both nice things and nice people here who shall tempt you much. I think in this instance it will compensate you to yield to temptation. The reason why we are especially concerned to have YOU come in is because you are the one of our numerous customers whom we always know make an intelligible responsiveness to unusual sales incentives.

a..... b.....

C

The following openings are "dead." Rewrite them, making them "alive."

- 1 We have no market for such merchandise.
- 2 We have made other arrangements for transportation.

- 3 Your terms are not sufficiently attractive to us.
- 4 Another concern is offering us better inducements, thank you.
- 5 It is inconceivable to us that the parcel should not have been received on time.
- 6 Unless you reduce your prices you cannot retain our custom.
- 7 Your terms are not liberal enough to interest any of our branches.
- 8 Our customers would not tolerate the price increase you suggest.
- 9 We do not issue the publication you mention, nor do we know who does or what the price is.
- 10 We are buying the goods elsewhere now, inasmuch as your two or three last shipments were slow in reaching us.
- 11 We are adequately supplied for a long time with the merchandise you offer.
- 12 Why should we make the change you suggest when everything is satisfactory at present!
- 13 At a directors' meeting today it was decided that this house would discontinue business with you at once.
- 14 We are obliged to refuse your offer inasmuch as it came to us so late.
- 15 We are astonished to have your letter saying that the new trap is unsatisfactory.
- 16 Inasmuch as you neglected to give us the gentleman's address, it is impossible for us to get the merchandise to him on time.
- 17 The goods which you say were damaged left our offices in perfect condition, so the post office must be at fault.
- 18 You do not understand our system, and we shall therefore explain it *again*.
- 19 If you fail, as so many users do, to press the top down before using, why, of course, the thing will get out of order!
- 20 Yours is the kickiest kick we've ever had, so don't be surprised at our kick-back as follows.
- 21 The trouble is that you do not give your salesmen enough help and encouragement in any way to enable them to do a good job for you. No man can work successfully for a business house that constantly nags and harasses him. And, by the way, when do I get that raise?
- 22 In 1929 he plunged, like everybody else, and lost everything he had. In 1931 he tried to stage a come-back but he has not been able to live down the wild habits that he formed during the peak years. In consequence his character, his capacity, and his capital are today completely nil. He is likewise down and out physically, we hear. Don't trust him for a red cent!

- 23 Our shipping clerk has fumbled again. Forgive him this last time, and we promise to get him before this day is done! Incidentally, you are wrong about the number of cartons ordered. We have your letter before us, and it explicitly says *six*, but you make the figure 8 look like the figure 6. This cannot be held against him, but the other errors certainly can and will be!
- 24 Don't tell us you can't pay! See the enclosed copies of your statements from three of the leading banks in this burg! You look solvent to us, Brother! Well, then, get that money to us, without any coaxing by way of instalment ideas and stamped-addressed envelopes and cash-discount concessions! Thursday morning of this week is DER TAG. If your certified check is not received by this time, why, POP GOES THE WEASEL!
- 25 Why not keep up with the neighbors? Why not look like a millionaire even tho you jolly well know you can never be one? Discard that old meandering gasoline buggy of yours and take advantage of our extra special liberal terms on the new RIDEABOUT TRIPLE SIX. You'll feel like a real citizen driving this magnificent machine around town. And, Boy, once you get that feeling you'll wonder why you've been such a piker all your life.

D

Tell in detail what is wrong with each of these letter beginnings, and rephrase each in better tone and form:

- 1 I am the typist you are looking for.
2. Relieve your anxiety. I am the very person to put your correspondence into shape.
- 3 I am not satisfied with my position as stenographer in the Eagle Graphite Company and thought perhaps you might have a job to offer me.
- 4 I want to make a change in my position inasmuch as my boss has refused to grant me a promised increase in salary.
- 5 Thinking that you may need an expert stenographer you are receiving this letter of application for a position with you.
- 6 Please take note that I shall be available for a position with you on and after July first inasmuch as I have suffered certain unpleasantness in my present job.
- 7 Having seen your advertisement in the morning paper this letter is sent to you wherein I herewith beg leave to apply for the position you have to offer me.
- 8 Yes, sir, I was graduated last evening from the commercial department of Yates University, and am now ready to serve you in an expert capacity in the phenomenal industrial service that you are rendering our public.

- 9 Thank you for your advertisement in the morning *Clarion*. It spells opportunity for me *and* for you also. I am sure that we shall work together most happily.
 - 10 Forgive this intrusion upon your most valuable time. But beg to state that I am qualified to fulfil the position that you so generously offer in your advertisement in today's *Messenger*.
 - 11 Goods were shipped exactly per your order and immediately that order was received AND—we have receipt from your receiving clerk. So you're whistling down the wrong alley when you accuse us of delays and inaccuracies.
 - 12 We are greatly disappointed in the report that you have just sent to us regarding the sales situation in the West, and regret to be obliged to say that, unless you can explain certain situations satisfactorily when next you are privileged to talk with us personally, feel that the situation will culminate in severing our relationship
-

E

Tell in detail what is wrong with each of these letter endings, and re-phrase each in better tone and form.

- 1 Feeling certain that you will not permit one so highly qualified as myself to escape your employment Very Truly Yours
- 2 Thanking you in advance for the assignment which I am sure you will give me after reading this letter beg to remain etc
- 3 In conclusion let me say that if the position is as good as your advertisement would seem to indicate I am satisfied to go to work for you.
- 4 But, remember, please, I can not possibly accept less than twenty-five dollars a week and must in addition have gasoline supplied for my car which makes it possible for me to arrive on time.
- 5 In the eventuation of your approval of this letter and of the enclosed recommendations I shall be pleased to see you some evening during the coming week.
- 6 Looking forward to a favorable reply and anticipating a satisfactory relationship with your old established firm I sign myself already Your Humble Servant and so forth.
- 7 I shall consider it an honor to be in your employment and I sincerely hope that nothing will transpire to prevent same taking place as soon as possible.
- 8 Again thanking you for this opportunity of addressing you and assuring you that you will make no mistake in taking on one of my outstanding qualifications Most Cordially Yours,
- 9 Give this matter your immediate attention please as I am in a hurry for the goods and if they are not precisely in accordance with specifications in order cannot be accepted and oblige yrs.

- 10 Unless we hear from you at once with remittance to cover the entire amount of your long-standing indebtedness we shall resort to law and the courts to see whether a firm of our honorable standing is obliged to take all this trouble to collect money honestly due us.
- 11 Our final word, then, is do not trust him inasmuch as you can see from the foregoing analysis of his financial condition and of his character and reputation as well that he is not only not good now for the amount you specify but is never again likely to be if, indeed, he ever was.
- 12 In short here is an opportunity for investment that comes in a man's way perhaps only once in a lifetime if that often and you'll be very foolish indeed if thinking of the future of those beloved kiddies of yours if you permit this chance to slip past you unbenefited by.

F

Express each of the following in the form of a highly economized forcereul slogan:

- 1 Nowadays it is considered up-to-date to be economical.
- 2 Inquire of the individual who has made himself the possessor of one of these.
3. This coffee retains its exquisite flavor until you drink to the very bottom of the cup.
- 4 If it isn't specifically marked with our name then you will understand that it is not our product.
- 5 If you were to smoke thousands—nay, millions—of these cigarettes you would not find your throat irritated.
- 6 In this publication you will find accounts of all events of the day that are suitable for and worthy of circulation among millions.
- 7 By character and reputation, by history and personnel, you will find that this company is second to no other and first to most in the same line of business.
- 8 Unless you take the best of care of them by using our preparation two or three times daily you will certainly become a member of that large army of sufferers.
- 9 Everybody wants to look young and fresh and beautiful, and everybody can realize this worthy ambition by habituating himself and herself to the daily application of this product.
- 10 There's nothing more clean looking and pleasing to the eye, and what's more, it will not sink in the tub and cause you to grope exasperatingly for it.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FRAME AND THE PICTURE

The parts of the business letter are as follows:

- 1 Heading
 - Place
 - Date
- 2 Inside Address
 - Name and address of person written to
- 3 Salutation
 - Greeting
- 4 Body
 - The subject-matter of the letter
- 5 Complimentary Closing
 - Courteous conclusion
- 6 Signature
 - With official capacity in which letter is written
- 7 Reference Data or Annotations
 - Annotation regarding enclosures and other matters
 - Initials (or typed name) of the dictator and of the typist

Part 7 and sometimes part 2 are omitted from friendly letters, tho the latter should not be omitted. Usually in friendly letters and in official letters the inside address is written at the lower left-hand corner of the letter, below the signature, where the annotations are usually placed. In official letters the annotations are placed below the inside address when it follows the signature.

THE HEADING

On printed letterheads the typist writes in the date of the month, and the year. Usually these items are centered under the letterhead itself or are placed to the right of it, thus establishing the righthand margin. On plain stationery the place as well as the date has to be included in the letterhead, and it is usually written on the righthand side as the topmost item of the letter. In friendly letters and sometimes (but rarely) in business letters the date is written at the lower lefthand corner of the letter. In social forms this placement is the rule. In the illustrations on page 237, as in most of the illustrative letters in this book, the year is indicated by four ciphers. Note that postal zone numbers, when given, follow the name of the city.

EXCELSIOR LETTER SHOPS
BREWSTER CIRCLE
WASHINGTON
D. C.

October
Twelfth
O O O O

The Bigsby Company
123 Market Street
San Francisco, Calif.

Gentlemen:

Attention Mr. Jay Bronson

This, the so-called modified style of letter set-up, has been steadily gaining ground among business letter writers for many years. It is neither so conservative as the letter on page 234 nor so extreme as the letter on page 236.

Printed letterheads never have terminal punctuation, of course, no matter how conservatively punctuated the letters may be that appear beneath them. And in this form there is no terminal punctuation in either the date line or the inside address. But there are always a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary closing. And there is always a period at the end of a declarative sentence closing a paragraph.

As a compromise between the old and the new—as a sort of way-station between putting-off-the-old and putting-on-the-new—this letter style is both satisfying and beautiful. The blocked form gives it an agreeable uprightness and compactness that connote business practice and principle. Altogether it is to be recommended highly.

A caution is necessary, however: Many typists place the colon studiously after the salutation and forget the comma after the complimentary closing or vice versa. Or sometimes they place a period after the date and then use no terminal punctuation in the inside address. These are slips—nothing more. But they are to be deplored because they violate the cardinal principle of the mechanics of business letter composition—CONSISTENCY. And perhaps they “show something” about an individual or a house—or both!

Balance, proportion, focus, movement—the four fundamental principles of Greek art—are beautifully illustrated in this letter. The placement of the letter is pictorially harmonious with the page size and shape. The margins, corresponding to the mat in a framed picture, are correctly proportioned. The paragraphs are of about equal length. There is no discordant note anywhere, no out-of-focus display, no irregularity in the procession of parts.

Very truly yours,

John B. Opdycke, President
EXCELSIOR LETTER SHOPS

THE BUSINESS LETTER BUREAU, INC.

138 State Street

CHICAGO

June Tenth
00 00Mr Irving Ravenscott
18 West Thirtieth Street
New York City

Dear Mr Ravenscott

After all, consistency is the one important thing in business letter copy. If you indent in some places and not in others, the recipient of your letters will decide that you have no positive letter policy, that you cannot make up your mind. He may conclude that you are yourself an undecided and perhaps vacillating person. And this would be unfortunate

You will probably not want to adopt a letter style and policy so "wide open" as this, with no period after *Mr* and no period at the end of a paragraph when its last sentence is declarative. This is considered altogether too advanced—too radical—for most business houses—yet. But I prophesy that the time is not far distant when everybody will see the wisdom of adopting this style. The letter picture is certainly the more beautiful for not being dotted here and there and everywhere with superfluous punctuation marks

Note especially the simplicity of margining in this letter. After your typist has centered the date (with which she will of course align the complimentary closing) she has to think of only two margins—the lefthand and the righthand. The former is automatically kept even by the typewriter. The latter she must take some pains with to keep it reasonably even, to prevent its looking like the hop, skip, and jump of a mountain cascade. But she can do this the more easily since she is relieved of managing numerous margins (see the letter on page 234) and of inserting much useless punctuation

Great unevenness in righthand margining is also an indication of inconsistency. Since few syllables are longer than three or four letters, no line should be more than three or four letters longer than another. The trouble is that the average typist becomes so absorbed with the content of a line that she forgets to plan ahead mechanically to keep all lines even or nearly so

Very truly, yours

John B Opdycke
Manager THE BUSINESS
LETTER BUREAU, INC.

JBO—mc

BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS
987 COLBY BOULEVARD
NEW YORK CITY

October 26, 0000.

Mr. Francis Kelehan,
23 Warder Avenue,
Denver, Colorado.

Dear Mr. Kelehan:

Re your query about style.

This style of letter set-up is regarded by many people as being old-fashioned today. It is conservative, to say the least, just as the letter on the preceding page is radical. But many business houses still adhere to the indented form and to the terminal punctuation practice in all letter parts.

It is a perfectly good style to follow, but it calls for more detailed observation on the part of the typist. She has five or six margins to keep in line, and she has to be particular about the placement of commas and periods. But the letter picture can be kept consistent if she will exercise care and patience in looking after these details.

There is one inconsistency, however, that most of those who adhere to this style of letter must take responsibility for, namely, the use of two signs to indicate paragraphing. The paragraph indention alone is sufficient notice that a new paragraph is beginning. But the spacing after each paragraph constitutes a notice to the same effect. There are, therefore, two signals for paragraph divisions. One notice ought really to be sufficient for anything.

Indention harks back to the days when formality by way of engraved forms held sway. Those who wrote letters by hand felt impelled to imitate the work of the engraver as far and as well as they possibly could. The tradition carried over to the typewriter when it came into general use. It is now equipped with marginal adjusters, to be sure, but even they require manipulation by the typist, and unnecessary movements are the result. Moreover, the indented letter always carries with it an atmosphere of restlessness. It appears to be a more nervous and fatiguing style than the blocked set-up.

It is somewhat more consistent to use indented form and closed punctuation together. Both seem to belong to the same period and the same point of view. But there is nothing whatever wrong with using indented form and open punctuation together, and blocked form and closed punctuation together.

Very truly yours,

John B. Opdycke,
Educational Director,
BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS.

JBO...MC...bt

12 East Twelfth Street
New York City 3
April 18, 0000

Mr Harrison Eastman
234 Madison Boulevard
Topeka, Kansas

Dear Mr Eastman

The business letter really consists of at least seven parts. The *heading* (1) consists of the address of the writer and the date on which the letter is written. The *inside address* (2) consists of the name and the address of the person to whom the letter is written. The *salutation* (3) is a formal greeting or "Hello" to the addressee. The *body* (4) is the message proper, and it is of course the longest and the most important part of the letter. The *complimentary closing* (5) is a formal adieu or "Good-by" to the addressee. The *signature* (6) consists of the writer's name signed by himself below the closing, and of his name and official position filled in by the typist. The *annotations* or *special data* (7) are the initials of the dictator and the typist and the notation of enclosures or of any other memoranda of importance to the firms concerned

On printed letterheads the first part or *heading* is divided into two parts—the address of the writer (with other matter perhaps, such as kind of business, telephone and cable addresses, names of company officials) printed at the top of the sheet, and the date line or block written in by the typist just below the printed heading or just below it and to the right. There may also be a letter title and an attention notice, either or both of which would be placed preferably a few spaces to the right of the salutation, one above the other in case both are used. But it is not customary to use both

In addition, there may be a filing notation at the upper lefthand corner of the letter page—above the inside address. This is for convenience of establishing letter sequence and for finding data pertaining to its contents. There may likewise be at this place a brief key to the letter, such as, To..... Date..... By..... About..... Mailed..... And again, this part of the letter may contain a *prescript*, that is, an apology for tardiness of reply, an excuse for covering two subjects in a single letter, a word or two saving that a telegram or other message was received just as this letter was about to be mailed, and so forth. The *prescript* is no more to be commended than the *postscript*, but both have been known to serve valuable purpose now and again. It is well to remember that, generally speaking, data at the upper lefthand corner of the letter are for the convenience of the addressee; at the lower lefthand corner, for the convenience of the writer

Very truly yours
John B Opdycke

John B Opdycke
CRS

BETTER LETTER SERVICE
777 WEST FIFTH STREET
NEW YORK CITY

From *Murray Bates, Manager*
Subject "*The new letter*"
Enclosures *Standard circular*
Mailed 9/4/00—5 p m
Dictated by *WWD*
Typed by *AMV*
Pages 1

To *Mr Clarence Witherspoon*
Address *Vinesboro*
New Jersey
Received 9/5/00—9 a m
Answer to *Inquiry of 9/2/00*
Reply *Open. Follow up*
File number *GW24365*

This letter set-up is strictly twenty-first century! Many people feel that a really businesslike letter procedure, such as this, would be a great improvement over the present traditional letter form. And it is still traditional and conventional, no matter how much it is liberalized thru open punctuation and blocked paragraphing

These people regard *Dear Sir* and *Very truly yours* as superfluous and as parrotlike as *Pleased to meet you* and *Is it warm enough for you*. They would delete from business correspondence such mere formalities, and would concentrate all necessary data in brief tables either at the top of the letter (as here) or at the bottom. Their contention is that this plan enables the writer to concentrate upon the body of the letter—the real message—and places all filing and cross-reference items in one place where a perfect correspondence sequence and history may be easily traced

More important still, they contend, is the fact that the message in such a letter as this is much less likely to be harassed by hackneyed expressions. The minute the dictator says *Dear Sir* or *Gentlemen* he is automatically thrown into the old letter mood and atmosphere—into a "bromide" condition—and he mechanically begins to speak in the cliché idiom, they say. This "new letter" will tend to counteract that deplorable tendency

Reforms similar to this have been tried occasionally by business houses, but owing to employee inertia or resistance they have usually failed after a short trial. Never, probably, have they been abandoned because of adverse criticism. Some critics do insist, however, that such an impersonal letter smacks something too much of the robotism that is so greatly deplored today by ladies and gentlemen of the "old school," that it is lacking entirely in those little courtesies and considerations that do so much toward making the world run with even a modicum of smoothness

There may be much to say on both sides. If the stereotyped salutation and complimentary closing tend to induce hackneyed letter language, so also may they be depended upon to take the edge off the temper of a business man when he has an unpleasant situation to treat in a letter. To hold to the old, however, just because "It's always been like this" is ridiculous. To refuse to put on the new just because "We've never done it like that" is ditto. A tailor once forgot to put the sleeve buttons on a customer's coat. The customer sued—and recovered them! Habit hallucinates

125 West 76 Street
New York City 23
May 15, 0000

Centerville
Bucks County
Pennsylvania
January 4, 0000

November 12, 0000

March 25
00 00

J u n e
23
0 0 0 0

June Fifteenth
Nineteen Hundred

125 West 76 Street,
New York 23, N. Y.,
May 15, 0000.

Airvale, Colorado,
June 25, 0000.

Coe Junction, Minn.,
May 3, 0000.

November Twelfth
0000

The Tenth of May
0000

December 12, 0000.

December
12
0000

There are many other variants of date placements, house practice and individuality deciding the issue in most cases.

THE INSIDE ADDRESS

In business letters the inside address, consisting of the name and address of the one to whom the letter is written, is placed usually on a line below the date and at the lefthand margin directly above the salutation. In friendly letters and in official letters it is placed at the lower lefthand corner. It is frequently omitted in friendly letters, but it should not be, inasmuch as a letter that becomes separated from its envelope cannot thus be forwarded. And if an exact heading has also been omitted it is unreturnable to the writer and is completely lost. In social forms it is always placed at the lower lefthand corner. The inside address should be the exact copy of the envelope address.

Mrs. Harrison Wentworth
181 Columbia Boulevard
Harrisburg, Penna.

Mrs. Harrison Wentworth,
181 Columbia Boulevard,
Harrisburg, Penna.

The Merivale Company
Market and Calthorn Streets
St. Louis, Missouri

Scott, Thomas, and Peabody,
534 Fifth Avenue,
Minneapolis,
Minn.

Market and Charnton Streets
Balc Boulevard at Market Street

Broadway at Tenth Street
 39-06 Thirty-fourth Avenue
 184 West 184 Street
 91-18 Ninety-first Street
 Tenth Avenue at Thirteenth Street
 Fourth Avenue and Tenth Street
 Fifth Avenue at 38 Street
 345 Sixteenth Avenue

are better than

Market & Charnton Streets
 Market Street—Bale Boulevard
 10th St. and Broadway
 39-06 34th Ave.
 184 W. 184th St.
 91-18 91st St.
 Tenth Avenue & 13th Street
 4th Avenue—38th Street
 345 16th Avenue

The former are clearer for the postman's eyes and are complete in form and statement. The latter are abbreviated forms, and in some cases the items may be run together by the eye at first glance. Serious mistakes have been made in handling letters so addressed that the street number and the house number ran together—*34 15 Street* should be *34 Fifteenth Street*.

It is permissible in business letters as elsewhere to place both personal and other title on the same line with the individual's name. But the business title may be placed one line below the name in case a more symmetrical arrangement results from doing so. The words *chairman*, *director*, *registrar*, *secretary*, *treasurer* are always used after names, never before them. Professional standing or rank of two different kinds may be indicated with the name, but two tokens for the same rank or standing may not be used. Lawyers and attorneys are sometimes addressed by *Esq.* after the name rather than by *Mr.* before, never by both. The former is commonly used in England as the general personal title instead of *Mr.* *Messrs.* should never be used before the name of a business organization or corporation. It may be used in connection with legal or other professional partnerships. It is commonly used before the names of a law partnership. The lefthand forms on pages 242 and 243 are correct; the righthand forms are incorrect.

Dignified and Artistic Letterheads

TELEPHONE
8-0420 FRANKLIN

PARKMAN PICTURE CORPORATION

1334 Sunset Boulevard
Hollywood
California

CABLE ADDRESS
DARDIC - CALIFORNIA

Department CV
Number 33,176

April
Sixth
0000

WOOD OF EVERY KIND

WOOD FOR EVERY PURPOSE

THE LONG-RANGE TIMBER COMPANY

(ESTABLISHED 1875)

2561 Hardman Avenue
Seattle, Washington

JAMES R. TILLING, *President*
SAMUEL MAYTIS, *Vice-President*

HOWARD AMERSON, *Secretary*
WILLIAM BRADDER, *Treasurer*

August Third
0000

GOOD FELLOWSHIP, Inc.

1920 Long Building

Kennett City, Missouri

In Reply, Please
Refer to 35-2-45

0000
July
10

THE HOWARD-WINTHROP COMPANY

18 STATE STREET
CHICAGO

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

May Fifth
0 0 0 0

PUBLISHED MONTHLY • THREE DOLLARS A YEAR

THE AMERICAN MERCHANDISING MAGAZINE

Direct-Mail Advertising

CHICAGO
25 Dearborn Street

19 West 19 Street
New York City

SAN FRANCISCO
229 Market Street

February 2, 0000

MRS. MARY CURTIS, *President*

AMERICAN PRESERVING COMPANY

AKINSIDE
OHIO

July Sixth
00 00

Dignified and Artistic Letterheads

THE AMERICAN SPECIFICATION INSTITUTE
THE ENGINEERING BUILDING
305 WEST WACKER DRIVE
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ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

February
10
0000

SHORTHAND • BUSINESS
VOCATIONAL



ART TECHNICAL
SCIENTIFIC

PITMAN PUBLISHING CORPORATION

Two West Forty-Fifth Street
NEW YORK

20 March 0000

American Institute of Filing

Owned and managed by Library Bureau
Division of Remington Rand

Remington Rand Building
465 Washington Street
Buffalo, New York

Miss N. Mae Sawyc
Director

July 6, 0000

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

WESTERN SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TESTING MATERIALS

FRANK A. RANDALL

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
305 WEST WACKER DRIVE
CHICAGO
TELEPHONE CENTRAL 5131

April Twenty-fifth
0000



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

354 FOURTH AVE. • NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

PUBLISHERS OF THE NEW STANDARD DICTIONARIES

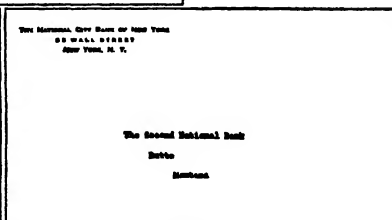
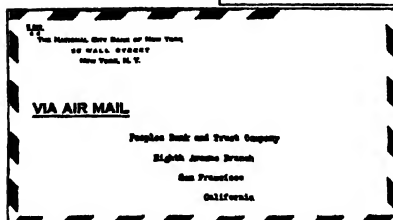
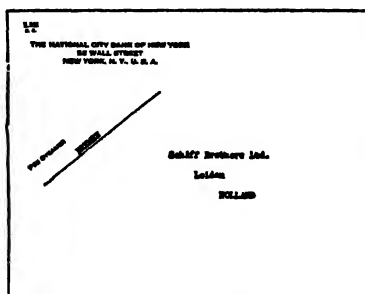
March Tenth
00 00

A Few Well-Addressed Envelopes

<p>BUSINESS LETTER SERVICE <small>LOOK FOR NAME OF MAIL CITY AND ZIP CODE AREA OF DELIVERY, ZIP CODE, ZIP CODE ZIP CODE 10010 NEW YORK CITY</small></p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Hardinger Building Sixteenth Floor</p>	<p>Dr. Thomas Eggleston 26 East Forty-fifth Street New York City 17</p>
<p>BLAIR PRINTING COMPANY <small>32 Grand Avenue Boston 02108</small></p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Attention Book Department</p>	<p>The Wilshire Company, Inc. 26 South State Street Chicago 3 Illinois</p>
<p><small>Box 10 HARRISON MANUFACTURING Co. 1401 North Lake & Ave. Washington, D.C. 20004</small></p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Credits</p>	<p>Blaine, Turner, and Company Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street New York 11, N. Y.</p>

<p>PLUM & WACHS COMPANY <small>Philadelphia 304 300 Fourth Avenue New York, N. Y.</small></p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Messrs. O'Melia and Rand Attorneys-at-Law 101 Chestnut Street Philadelphia, Pa.</p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Stamp</p>	<p>Stamp</p>
<p>Mr. Maurice K. Landerwan 324 Carrollton Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota</p>	<p>Also See Box Western Mailbox Box 10 COLUMBIA, MD</p> <p>Mrs. James E. Stanton, Fish Building, Broadway at 57 Street, New York City 10.</p> <p>Box 1011</p> <p>Lakewood Trust Company 324 Carrollton Boulevard Minneapolis Minnesota</p> <p>Att: Mr. Maurice K. Landerwan</p>
<p>c/o Lakewood Trust Company</p>	

See pages 360 and 361 for the letters for two of these envelopes.



Mr. Thomas Brainard, Treasurer *not* Treasurer Thomas Brainard
The Blair Oil Company The Blair Oil Company

or
Mr. Thomas Brainard
Treasurer, Blair Oil Company

President James R. Treadwell
The Keedick Industrial College

or
Dr. James R. Treadwell *not* Dr. James R. Treadwell, D.D.
President, The Keedick Industrial College

or
The President of The Keedick Industrial College

Dr. Harrison Hunter *not* Dr. Harrison Hunter, M.D.
Dean of the Medical School

or
Harrison Hunter, M.D.
Dean of the Medical School

or
Dean Harrison Hunter
Blakeville Medical School

Mr. Joel Ellert Chanler, Registrar *not* Registrar Joel Ellert Chanler
North Mandeville College

or
Mr. Joel Ellert Chanler
Registrar, North Mandeville College

Lawrence Hammersmith, Esq. *not* Mr. Lawrence Hammersmith, Esq.

or

Lawrence Hammersmith, Attorney

or

Mr. Lawrence Hammersmith
Attorney-at-law

Professor Samuel Dilman

or

Dr. Samuel Dilman
Professor of History

not Dr. Samuel Dilman, Ph.D.

Messrs. Tone and Zell
Attorneys-at-law

not Messrs. Tone and Zell, Esqs.

The British combination forms—*Harold Janver, Jr., Esq.* and *Harold Janver, Sr., Esq.*—are not used in the United States (see pages 257 to 265).

THE SALUTATION

The salutation should be started at the lefthand margin, not continued diagonally with the items of the inside address when that is indented. It constitutes a new category or paragraph in itself. These are correct forms in business and official letters:

Dear Sir

Dear Sirs (not generally used or recommended)

Gentlemen (preferable form)

Sir

Sirs } (these two are primarily official letter salutations)

My dear Sir

My dear Sirs } (the three-word salutation is not generally used)

Dear Sir or Madam (used when a letter is written to either a man or a woman, or when a writer cannot tell from the signature of the letter he is answering whether it is that of a man or a woman)

Dear Sir and Madam (used when a letter is written to both a man and a woman)

Dear Madam

Dear Ladies { (rarely used but correct)

Dear Mesdames

Ladies

Mesdames

My dear Madam

My dear Mesdames (see above for three-word salutation)

Ladies and Gentlemen

Sirs and Mesdames (rarely used)

These are used in friendly letters:

Dear Mr. Jameson
Dear Mrs. Thompson

Dear Mary
Dear William

The attention notice is preferably written on the salutation line at the center of the letter page. But it is sometimes placed on the line below and sometimes (less wisely) between the inside address and the salutation.

The Erdman Company
Lancaster
Arizona

Gentlemen Attention Mr. James R. Gill

The attention position in a business letter is sometimes used for the title of the message or for some other notation calculated to help the receiving house.

The Erdman Company
Lancaster
Arizona

Gentlemen Re Accident Policy 11678

or

Gentlemen The Jones vs. Adams Case

The title notice and the attention notice are rarely used in the same letter. But occasionally they are, and in such cases the attention notice should follow the general title.

Gentlemen As to Invoice AF 657
Attention Mr. Elwell Bronson

It is good practise to underline the name of the person to whose attention the letter is called. It is correct for the salutation to be plural even with an individual attention notice, for the letter is addressed to the company and is called to the attention of Mr. Bronson as a member of the company.

The name of a single individual used as a firm name requires the plural salutation and does not take the personal title before it.

John Wanamaker	<i>not</i> Mr. John Wanamaker
	<i>not</i> Messrs. John Wanamaker
Gentlemen	<i>not</i> Dear Sir

Madam is used for either a married or an unmarried woman. *Gentlemen* is the preferred salutation in all letters addressed to companies, even when a partnership consists of a man and a woman or of men and women. *Sir* and *Sirs*, and *Mesdames*

and *Ladies* are used in formal and official correspondence, but rarely in business. Such blunt salutations as *Gents*, *S'r*, *Messrs.*, *Miss* constitute vulgarisms and should not be used.

The use of *My* in the salutation is gradually passing. The better form of personal salutation is *Dear Mr. Morrison*, not *My dear Mr. Morrison*. Where the latter is still used the word *dear* is preferably not capitalized.

In closed punctuation and in modified punctuation forms the salutation in business letters is always followed by a colon. In the open punctuation form it is not followed by any punctuation mark. In friendly letters a comma is preferably used after the salutation in the two former styles of set-up.

Both the salutation and the complimentary closing are passing, especially from business correspondence. Many firms have rightly come to regard them as useless conventions and are omitting them. Others—the majority as yet—retain them because they represent “good old custom” and savor of the epistolary amenities of an earlier day. There is no logical reason for their use, and another decade or two will probably see them eliminated altogether from business letters (see letter reproduced on page 207). If, as has been said in this book and in all other books on the subject, letters should be nothing more or less than “conversation writ down,” then the *Dear-Sir* and *Very-truly-yours* bromides are seen to be not only illogical but ridiculous.

THE BODY

The body of a letter—business and friendly—must be regarded as a piece of regular composition, planned and paragraphed as any other kind of composition ought to be. In the main, however, the paragraphing in the letter should be briefer than it is in most other forms of composition. Care should be exercised to keep the paragraphing uniform with the style of set-up established by the other parts of the letter, that is, blocked consistently with those other parts, or indented like them, whichever the policy of the individual house or writer decides. A succession of paragraphs having very short last lines may give a lopsided appearance to the body of a letter, and it is nearly always possible to prevent such disproportional appearance. The righthand margin can be kept far more even than most righthand margins are kept as a rule. A little attention brought to bear upon it will work wonders.

Since very few syllables are longer than three letters (four spaces in case the hyphen is counted) it follows that no line has to be more than four spaces longer than any other. Yet many letters have lines that are carried to as many as ten spaces beyond others on the righthand side, and the appearance is ragged and inchoate as a consequence.

THE COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING

These complimentary closings are good:

Truly yours
 Yours truly
 Very truly yours
 Yours very truly (these four are strictly business closings)
 Sincerely yours
 Yours sincerely
 Very sincerely yours
 Yours very sincerely (these are somewhat too intimate for formal business use)
 Cordially yours
 Yours cordially (these two have been called the "special acquaintance" closing)
 Yours respectfully
 Respectfully yours (these two are used in reports, in official letters, and in letters written to acknowledgedly superior authority)
 Yours faithfully
 Faithfully yours
 Yours as ever
 As ever yours (these four, and others of their kind, are friendly letter closings)

The complimentary closing should not be preceded by a participial phrase, such as *Hoping for an early reply* and *Trusting this will be satisfactory*. It serves no purpose whatever, and it may tempt into ungrammatical relationships. If used, it should always be followed by *I am* or *we are* in order that the participle may not dangle, that is, in order that the participle may have something to modify. This is correct:

Hoping to hear from you soon, I am
 Very truly yours

These are incorrect:

Hoping to hear from you soon
 Very truly yours

Hoping to hear from you soon, and oblige
 Very truly yours

The terms *I am*, *I remain*, and *oblige* are hackneyed, and should not be used at or near the conclusion of a letter. Stop with the last necessary sentence of the body, and follow with the complimentary closing only.

It is customary to separate the complimentary closing from the last line of the body of a letter by double spacing. But in some firms single spacing only is permitted, especially in letters pertaining to credit. This prevents the insertion of any material that might invalidate the message itself. The first word only of the complimentary closing should be capitalized. In closed punctuation and in modified punctuation forms, it is followed by the comma. In the open punctuation form it is not followed by any punctuation mark. Such abbreviations as *Yrs.*, *Res'y*, *Tly.* *yrs.* in the complimentary closing of a letter, are, of course, vulgarisms. (See the last paragraph under THE SALUTATION.)

THE SIGNATURE

Signatures to letters vary in form and placement. This is the one letter part that may be permitted to run riot against the principle of consistency in letter form. Individuality enters here. A person's signature is something strictly special to himself, and he cannot be denied the privilege of making it his very own. But every good business letter today carries—or should do so—the writer's name in type several spaces below the complimentary closing. The typist sees to it that it is typed here before she takes the letter out of the machine. In the wide space between the complimentary closing and the typed name of the writer he may individualize his signature to his heart's content and make it as customarily illegible as he pleases! The placement of the typed signature should correspond to the general letter form as to blocking or indenting.

Titles and degrees should never be used with signatures. It is always preferable for the writer (dictator) of a business letter to indicate his position below his typed name. In case a secretary signs for him, said secretary may sign his own name and follow it with *For*, then adding his employer's name. Or he may sign his employer's name, and initial or write his own after it, preceding either with the word *By*. The signature is the letter part that most aggressively defies prescription. Business firms and even departments within firms differ widely as to signature forms, as witness:

A man's name should be signed in full, or with two initials preceding the surname. Never should the surname be preceded by a single initial. *Harrison B. Smith* is a good form. *H. B. Smith* is allowable, but not the best form. *H. Smith* is bad.

A woman should always indicate whether she is Mrs. or Miss. Never should *Alice D. Wainwright* sign herself *A. D. Wainwright*, for the person who is called upon to address her cannot tell whether she is man or woman. These are correct:

(Mrs.) Alice D. Wainwright
(Miss) Alice D. Wainwright

Alice D. Wainwright
(Mrs. Herbert K.)

Alice D. Wainwright is the woman's name. *Mrs. Herbert K. Wainwright* is her title, and it is permissible and customary for her to retain this as her title after her husband's death. A divorced woman may assume and use her maiden name, and it is a correct custom for her to do so. If she does not, she may find her married title duplicated, much to her confusion and the other woman's! Whether she signs herself *Mrs. Alice D. Sanderson* or *Miss Alice D. Sanderson* after she is divorced from Mr. Herbert K. Wainwright, is entirely a matter of her choice. She may, however, keep the married surname and use her given name with it—*Miss* or *Mrs. Alice D. Wainwright*. She may, again, keep the married surname and use her maiden name as a given name with it—*Mrs. Sanderson Wainwright*. But she may not follow either of these in her signatures with (Mrs. Herbert K.). A married woman who keeps her own name for business or professional reasons may likewise use either *Miss* or *Mrs.* If she desires to have her married name known also, she must write both names. These rules apply also to letterheads (see pages 239 and 240).

In all legal papers, and especially in wills and deeds, a woman should use her name rather than her title. In each case, however, she should sign the name used in the drawing of the legal paper itself. It is wiser for a woman to use her name, not her title, in connection with a checking account at a bank. But usage varies widely in this. The individual woman sets up her own custom in such matters. She may have *Mrs.* or *Miss* printed on her checks and may therefore endorse them with the personal title. She may also dictate the form of name she prefers carried on programs, as a patroness, in publicity accounts and sailing lists. A business woman should indicate her position after her typed signature at

the bottom of her letters. She may sign herself *Mrs. James Hay*, *Mrs. Helen Hay*, or *Helen Hay* on hotel registers. Husband and wife should always be registered under the form *Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Wentworth*, not *Mr. Aaron Wentworth and wife*. The woman secretary follows the rules mentioned above in regard to signing for her employer. If her position as secretary is confined to a certain field she will indicate it, namely, *Executive Secretary*, *Secretary of Personnel*, *Corresponding Secretary*.

SPECIAL DATA OR ANNOTATIONS

These belong at the lower lefthand part of the business letter—below the line on which the signature is typed and on the lefthand margin. They are properly written after everything else has been included. Last of all come the initials of the dictator and of the typist, and in this order. This means two sets of initials written in various styles:

DR/CJ DR—cj DRcj DR**CJ DRxcj

In case three people are involved, three sets of initials may be used. One may order a letter written; one may dictate it word by word; one (the typist) writes it. The last may sometimes be designated by a number:

JBO/DR/CJ JBO...DR...cj JBO/DR/6

In much business letter writing today the typed name of the composer of the letter is written where the first initials above stand rather than under the complimentary closing. This is also good. So long as the name is clearly typed in somewhere, it does not so much matter at which of these places it is put.

James B. Ogden/cj James B. Ogden—CJ

At this location should be placed any other matter about which the house sending the letter wishes to guarantee or safeguard or verify action. The initials above given are of no importance to the receiving house. But to the sending house they may be valuable in tracing responsibility. In the same way such notations as *Enclosure*, *Three Enclosures*, *Catalog Mailed*, *Stamps Enclosed* may later prove something or other for the house from which the letter goes. These words, and others like them, should be placed on a line just above the initials above explained. So also should

the sign *Dictated by Mr.....but signed in his absence*. But this notice has now luckily fallen into such disrepute that it is rarely used any more. It was never anything more in business letter writing than an affectation, and a very discourteous one at that.

Data for the convenience or information of the receiving house should be placed at the beginning of the business letter. These are some of the many kinds of data that may be desirable in this position:

From.....	To regarding... .. date.....page...
To	Dictated to..... by..... date.....
Subject	subject.....
Date	

Dictated June 24, 0000
 Mailed June 27, 0000
 Held for importation invoice

In your reply please mention CF461

Please mention File Number 223ab when you answer this letter

And so forth. These are but a few of the many devices that may be evoked by special conditions. The general principle of annotation of these and other kinds is important: for the recipient, annotations at the beginning of the letter; for the sender, annotations at the end.

-- -- --

By way of review of the technical letter details above explained, the student will do well to study the two following letter analyses. The first two letters are extremely badly written. But they are not exaggerated. There are many so-called business letters in the mails at this very moment that are quite as bad as these. There are also, it is comforting to note, many business letters in the mails at this very moment that are quite as good as the rewritten ones below (perhaps better).

A bad reply to an inquiry-claim letter:

3 February,

James R. Griffen, Esq.,
 25 Madison Square
 New York City 10

My dear Sir:—

I am in receipt of your communication of even date and in reply would say that I am enclosing booklets asked for, I list them in order that you may check up,—

Foreign Trade Outlook
Recommended Investments
Trust Funds and their Management
Liberty Bonds below Par
China as Undeveloped Financial Territory
The Executor and his Work
Our South American Branches

I am sorry that you have been displeased with our monthly statement forms. I will have duplicates of your last statement examined, and corrected form forwarded to you. Trusting this will prove entirely satisfactory,

Truly yours,

TAVISTOCK TRUST COMPANY

A bad adjustment letter:

181 Lenox Av
June 25th
New York 26

Misses Jones and Everett,
222 Broadway—N.Y.

Dear Ladies,—We beg to acknowledge yr. esteemed favor of 20th inst and in reply would say that errors in acct for May are deeply regretted by us. I have taken immediate steps to have same corrected and enclose herewith another statement which we hope will meet with your entire satisfaction.

We crave your pardon, and beg to inform you that mistakes are made as result of circumstances over which I had no control, namely and to wit, illness on part of many employees, removal into new building, disturbed and fluctuating market conditions, incomplete equipment due to removal, transference of certain employees from one dept. to another in order to help us overcome the disadvantages of our situation and etc.

Hoping you will forgive us this time, regretting our shortcomings in connection with and pertaining to your monthly statement, and trusting you have not been seriously inconvenienced thereby

Yrs Resp'y

Commercial Trust Company

p.p. James Wickersham

CD/JW/VN

The foregoing inquiry-claim reply written as it should be. It would be better in all such cases to write two letters, since two entirely unrelated subjects are treated. When this is not done, however, some clear-cut partition should be made, as in the letter on the next page.

February 3, 0000

Mr. James R. Griffen
25 Madison Square
New York City 10

Dear Mr. Griffen

I

The duplicate of your last statement is being corrected and it will be sent to you today, or tomorrow at the latest. We are very sorry indeed that our monthly forms have not been satisfactory to you. Please always let us know at once whenever our transactions and correspondence are not right in every way, and we shall do everything possible to make them so, especially in your case.

II

The booklets requested are enclosed, arranged as here listed for your convenience of check-up.

A

Foreign Trade Outlook
Our South American Branches
China as Undeveloped Financial Territory

B

The Executor and his Work
Trust Funds and their Management

C

Recommended Investments
Liberty Bonds Below Par

We think you will find these both useful and profitable. Many of our customers have transferred funds to their advantage after studying these publications and conferring with us.

Very truly yours

TAVISTOCK TRUST COMPANY

7 enclosures
CS/bg

The foregoing adjustment letter written as it should be:

June 25, 0000.

Misses Jones and Everett,
222 Broadway,
New York City 7.

Dear Ladies:

Your statement, revised and corrected, is enclosed. It comes to you under special delivery because we fear that you may be delaying important transactions pending its receipt.

According to our records you have been a highly valued customer of ours since 1920, and you have never before, we think, been obliged to call our attention to error in our reports to you.

This fine relationship covering more than fifteen years simply reacts now to make the present lapse of ours all the more culpable. We have neither alibis nor excuses. We would not impose them upon you if we had. We are very sorry, and we are appreciative of your indulgent attitude toward us.

Yours very truly,

COMMERCIAL TRUST COMPANY
p.p. James Wickersham

P.S. By the way, have you seen our new ladies' wallets of damascene cloth? We shall be happy if you will accept the two that we are sending to you by parcel post. These are made up in various tints and shades to match ensembles, and we shall be glad to give you others in different tones. They are to be distributed to certain customers of long standing on the tenth of next month when we celebrate our sesquicentennial, and you might as well have yours now.

CD/JW/VEN

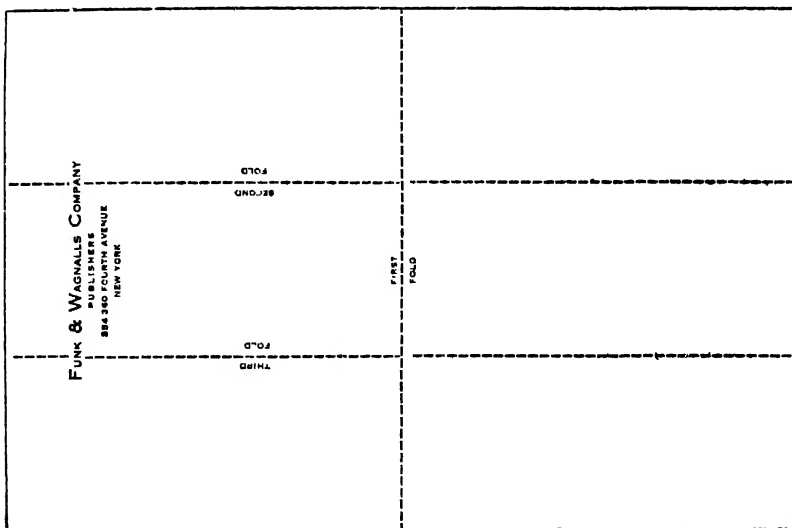
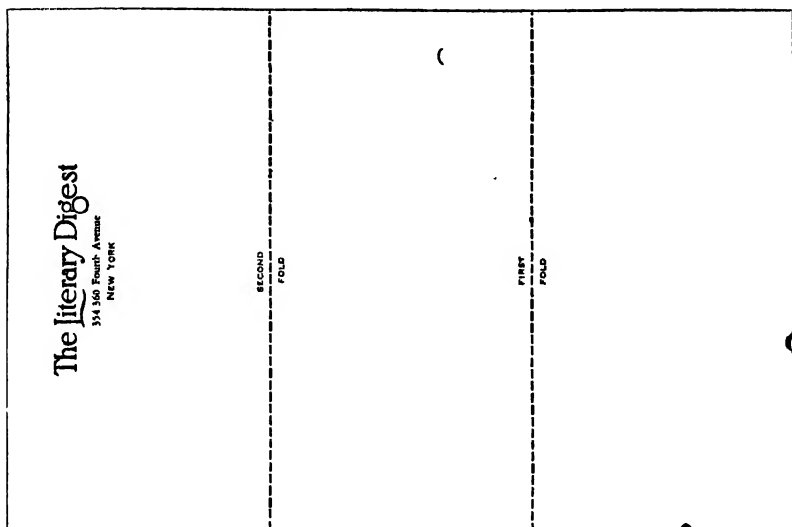
FOLDING THE LETTER

The customary way of folding a letter—for both sizes of commercial envelope—is illustrated on page 256. A slightly different plan, however, now increasingly used, is as follows:

For the large commercial envelope, turn the paper up from the bottom somewhat less than one third of its length. Then turn it down from the top somewhat more than one third of its length. The top fold extends over the lower a little, affording a thumb-catch. It may also enable the receiver of the letter to see part of the firm name before the letter has been unfolded. There are two horizontal creases in the paper by this fold.

For the small commercial envelope, turn the paper up from the bottom somewhat less than one half of its length. Hold it before you so that part of the letterhead is visible. Then turn this once folded paper in from the right somewhat less than one third of its width, and turn it in from the left somewhat more than one third of its width. This last fold leaves a thumb catch. There are one horizontal crease and two vertical creases in the paper by this fold.

The well-turned-out letter is folded with precision (see exposition on page 255).



SPECIAL TITLES, SALUTATIONS, AND CLOSINGS

The title *Honorable* is used in addressing all elected and appointed officials—municipal, state, federal—in whom is vested major authoritative power. This means members of the President's cabinet, senators and representatives, governors, ambassadors, ministers, judges (with exception of members of the armed forces, and of judges of the Supreme Court for whom the word *Justice* may become a name), heads and members of important commissions and bureaus, mayors of cities, members of governing municipal bodies, and others who hold honorable place in any movement of public significance. *Right Honorable* (spelled *Honourable* in British usage, of course) is used in addressing privy councilors, commoners, knights, baronets, and the younger sons and daughters of dukes and marquesses. Children of peers and of maids of honor are addressed as *Honourable*. *Most Honourable* is used with marquess, marchioness, and sometimes with earl and countess.

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
The President The White House Washington, D. C. <i>or</i> President Roosevelt Washington, D. C.	Sir To the President Dear Mr. President	Respectfully submitted Respectfully yours Sincerely yours Faithfully yours
The Vice-President United States Senate <i>or</i> The Honorable the Vice-President of the United States Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Vice-President	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable The Speaker of the House of Representatives <i>or</i> The Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Speaker	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable The Secretary of State <i>or</i> The Honorable Lee James Secretary of State Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Secretary	Respectfully yours Very truly yours

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
The Honorable The Secretary of Agriculture Washington, D. C. <i>or</i> The Honorable James Hall Secretary of Agriculture Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Secretary	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Undersecretary of State Washington, D. C. <i>or</i> The Honorable James Dow Undersecretary of State Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Dow	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Chief Justice of the United States <i>or</i> The Chief Justice <i>or</i> Chief Justice Hughes Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Mr. Chief Justice	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
Mr. Justice Marshall Department of Justice Washington, D. C.	Dear Mr. Justice Dear Justice Marshall	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable John Reed <i>or</i> Senator John Reed The United States Senate Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Senator Dear Senator Reed	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Assistant Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Washington, D. C. <i>or</i> The Honorable Henry Abbey Assistant Secretary of the Department of Agriculture Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Abbey	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable Thomas Lee <i>or</i> Representative Thomas Lee The House of Representatives Washington, D. C.	Dear Sir Dear Mr. Lee Dear Representative Lee	Respectfully yours Very truly yours

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
Admiral John Tyson c/o FPO San Francisco California	Sir Dear Sir Dear Admiral Tyson	Respectfully yours Very truly yours Sincerely yours
Colonel Harrison Roe Department of War Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Colonel Roe *	Respectfully yours Very truly yours Sincerely yours
The Honorable James Brown Chief Judge, Court of Appeals Columbus, Ohio	Sir Dear Sir Dear Judge Brown	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable Horace Fiske United States District Judge Chicago, Illinois	Sir Dear Sir Dear Judge Fiske	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
His Excellency The Governor of New York or The Honorable Horace Beard Governor of New York Albany, N. Y.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Governor Beard Dear Governor	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable Guy Spensler Lieutenant Governor of Ohio Columbus, Ohio or The Lieutenant Governor of the State of Ohio Columbus Ohio	Sir Dear Sir Dear Lieutenant Governor	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable Mark Ordway or Senator Mark Ordway Senate Chamber The Capitol Albany, New York	Sir Dear Sir Dear Senator Dear Senator Ordway	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Honorable Aaron Smith or Representative Aaron Smith Assembly Chamber The Capitol Albany, New York	Sir Dear Sir Dear Representative Smith	Respectfully yours Very truly yours
The Mayor of the City of Chicago or The Honorable Orson Howard Mayor of the City of Chicago City Hall Chicago Illinois	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Mayor Dear Mayor Howard	Respectfully yours Very truly yours

* Army and navy titles below the rank of lieutenant are preferably not used in salutations.

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
His Excellency The Ambassador of Great Britain British Embassy Washington, D. C.	Sir Excellency Your Excellency Dear Mr. Ambassador	Please accept, Your Excellency, the renewed assurance of my highest respect and consideration <i>or</i> Yours respectfully
His Excellency The Ambassador of Russia Russian Embassy Washington	Sir Excellency Your Excellency Dear Mr. Ambassador	Yours respectfully <i>or</i> I have the honor to be, with the highest respect and consideration, Your Excellency's obedient servant
His Excellency The American Ambassador to Great Britain <i>or</i> The Honorable Alan Davis American Ambassador to Great Britain The American Embassy London England	Sir Your Excellency Dear Mr. Ambassador	Yours respectfully Very truly yours
The Honorable Pedro López Minister of Guatemala The Guatemalan Legation Washington, D. C.	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Minister	Yours respectfully Yours very truly
The American Consul at Madras <i>or</i> Henry Treadwell, Esq. American Consul at Madras	Sir Dear Sir Dear Mr. Treadwell	Yours respectfully Very truly yours
The Rev. President Thomas Conrad	Dear President Conrad Dear Doctor Conrad	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
The Rev. Professor Howard McGill <i>or</i> Professor Howard McGill <i>or</i> The Rev. Howard McGill	Dear Professor McGill Dear Dr. McGill	Yours respectfully Yours very truly

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
Dean Harriet Black Grange College Boise City Idaho <i>or</i> Dean Black	Dear Dean Black Dear Dr. Black Dear Miss Black	Yours respectfully Yours very truly
His Holiness <i>or</i> His Holiness the Pope	Your Holiness <i>or</i> Most Holy Father	Dutifully yours Your dutiful son (daughter) Respectfully yours
His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop Coe <i>or</i> His Eminence Cardinal Coe, Archbishop of Exeter	Your Eminence	Obediently yours Respectfully yours
His Grace the Archbishop of Exeter <i>or</i> Most (or Very) Reverend Archbishop of Exeter	Your Grace Most Reverend Sir Very Reverend Arch- bishop Dear Archbishop	Respectfully yours Sincerely yours
To the Right Reverend Harold T. Bass, Bishop of Cincinnati	Right Reverend and Dear Sir <i>or</i> Dear Bishop	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
Rev. Father Cassidy <i>or</i> Rev. James J. Cassidy	Dear Father Cassidy Dear Reverend Father Dear Father	Sincerely yours Faithfully yours Cordially yours
Reverend Mother Superior, O.S.G. ² Reverend Mother Rosaria	Reverend Mother Dear Reverend Mother	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
Sister Alice Regardia	Dear Sister Dear Sister Alice	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
Brother Bernardus	Dear Brother Dear Brother Bernardus	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
Dean Albert Gray <i>or</i> The Very Rev. Dean Gray	Very Reverend Sir Dear Dean	Yours respectfully Sincerely yours Cordially yours

² Order of St. Gregory.

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
The Reverend William Grew <i>or</i> Rev. William Grew <i>or</i> Rev. Dr. William Grew	Dear Sir Dear Mr. Grew Dear Dr. Grew	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely Yours cordially
Rabbi Horace Denken <i>or</i> Rev. Horace Denken	Dear Sir Dear Mr. Denken Dear Rabbi Denken,	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely Yours cordially
The Most Reverend His Grace The Lord Archbishop of York <i>or</i> The Lord Archbishop of York	My Lord Archbishop Dear Archbishop	I have the honor to be, my Lord Archbishop, your faithful and humble servant <i>or</i> Your Grace's most obedient and humble servant
The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of York <i>or</i> The Lord Bishop of York	My Lord My Lord Bishop Dear Bishop	I have the honor to remain your Lordship's obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to remain, my dear Lord Bishop, sincerely and faithfully yours
The Very Reverend the Dean of York	Reverend Sir Very Reverend Sir Dear Dean	Sincerely yours Faithfully yours Obediently yours
The Venerable the Archdeacon of York <i>or</i> Venerable Archdeacon of York	Venerable Sir Dear Archdeacon	Respectfully yours Sincerely yours
Canon Armenton <i>or</i> The Reverend Canon Armenton	Reverend Sir Dear Canon	Yours respectfully Yours sincerely
The King's Most Excellent (<i>and/or</i> Gracious) Majesty	Sire May it please Your Majesty Your Imperial Majesty Your Most Excellent Majesty Your Gracious Majesty Your Majesty	Your Majesty's most obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to be Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant

Address	Salutation	Complimentary Closing
The Queen's Most Excellent (and/or Gracious) Majesty	Madam May it please Your Majesty Your Imperial Majesty Your Most Excellent Majesty Your Gracious Majesty	Your Majesty's most obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to be Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant
His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales <i>or</i> His Royal Highness Prince Alfred	Sir May it please your Royal Highness	Your Royal Highness's most obedient servant
Her Royal Highness the Princess Alice	Madam May it please your Royal Highness	Your Grace's obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to be your Royal Highness's obedient servant
His Royal Highness the Duke of York	Sir May it please your Royal Highness	Your Royal Highness's most obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to be your Royal Highness's obedient servant
Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York	Madam May it please your Royal Highness	Your Grace's obedient servant <i>or</i> I have the honor to be your Royal Highness's obedient servant
The Most Noble the Duke of Athol <i>or</i> His Grace the Duke of Athol <i>or</i> The Duke of Athol	Your Grace My Lord Duke Dear Duke of Athol	Your Grace's most obedient servant <i>or</i> Believe me, dear Duke, yours very sincerely
The Most Noble the Duchess of Athol <i>or</i> Her Grace the Duchess of Athol <i>or</i> The Duchess of Athol	Your Grace Madam Dear Duchess of Athol	Your Grace's most obedient servant <i>or</i> Believe me, dear Duchess, yours very sincerely

Salutations and complimentary closings for the following lesser degrees of nobility are similar to those given above, and are therefore not repeated. In formal letters addressed to peers—earls, viscounts, barons, bishops, lord mayors—the feudal *My Lord* is still used. But dukes, marquesses, archbishops are addressed formally as *My Lord Duke*, *My Lord Marquess*, *My Lord Archbishop*. The wife of an Earl is a *Countess*. The wife of a peer may be addressed as *Madam* or *Your Ladyship* or *Your Grace*, if of high rank. *Honourable* and *Right Honourable* may be used for those of lesser rank. An Archdeacon may be addressed as *Honourable Sir*. In informal correspondence *Dear Lord So-and-so* may be permissible, the style depending of course upon the relationship existing between the addresser and the addressee.

The Right Honourable Lord Ashley Marmaduke
 The Right Honourable Lady Ashley Marmaduke
 The Most Honourable the Marquess Almansted
 The Most Honourable the Marchioness of Almansted
 The Right Honourable the Earl of Demscott
 The Right Honourable the Countess of Demscott
 The Honourable Harris Wenscote
 Lady Patricia Wenscote
 The Right Honourable the Viscount Shapland
 The Right Honourable the Viscountess Shapland
 The Honourable Robert Shapland
 The Honourable Alicia Shapland
 The Right Honourable Baron Baketsfeld
 The Right Honourable Baroness Bakersfeld
 Sir Hamilton Bartonfield, Bt. (or Bart.)
 Lady Bartonfield
 Sir Alfred Ferguson, K. C.
 Lady Ferguson
 The Worshipful the Mayor of Exeter
or
 The Lord Mayor of London

It may be helpful at times for letter writers to know the most general titles of address in the four leading European languages. Firms having regular correspondence with Europeans, properly insist upon the use of the foreign title; those having only occasional correspondence, with equal propriety use the English title. The latter is always perfectly understood and respected. The abbreviations of foreign titles given on page 265 are correctly used on the envelope but not in the letter.

While international correspondents do not have to use the native French, German, Italian, and Spanish place names, they sometimes find it convenient to know a few of the principal ones.

English	French	German	Italian	Spanish
Mr	Monsieur M	Herr Herrn (to Mr)	Signor Sig Sig ^r	Señor Señor Don (with Christian name)
Messrs	Messieurs MM	Herren	Signori Sigg Sig ⁱ	Señores Sies
Mrs	Madame Mme Mesdames Mmes } Plural	Frau Frauen (plural)	Signora	Señora Señora Doña (with Christian name)
Miss	Mademoiselle Mlle	Fraulein	Signorina	Señorita Señorita Doña (with Christian name)
Misses	Mesdemoiselles Milles (also Mesdames)	Fraulein	Signorine	Señoritas
Son	Fils	Sohn	Figlio Sig Figlio	Hijo
Sons	Fils (Messieurs les Fils de)	Sohne	Figli Sigg Figli	Hijos
Brother	Frère	Bruder	Fratello Sig Fratello	Hermano Ho
Brothers	Frères	Brüder Gebrüder (Herren Wolff Bruder Herren Gebrüder Wolff)	Fratelli Sigg Fratelli	Hermanos Hos
Company	Société ³ Compagnie ³ Cie Société Anonyme ⁴	Kompanie ³ Gesellschaft ⁴	Società ³ Società Anonima ⁴	la Compania ³ la Sociedad Anónima ⁴

³ Not a corporation or partnership.⁴ Limited liability company

The French, for instance, call Antwerp, Anvers; Belgium, La Belgique; Britain, Bretagne; Brussels, Bruxelles; Dunkirk, Dunquerque; England, Angleterre; Geneva, Genève; Germany, Allemagne; the Hague, La Haye; Havre, Le Havre; London, Londres; Marseilles, Marseille; Netherlands, Pays-Bas; Rheims, Reims; Spain, Espagne; Switzerland, Suisse; United States, Etats-Unis; and France itself, La France.

The Germans call Aix la Chapelle, Aachen; Alsace-Lorraine, Elsass-Lothringen; Antwerp, Antwerpen; Bavaria, Bayern; Belgium, Belgien; Brunswick, Braunschweig; Brussels, Brüssel; Carlsruhe, Karlsruhe; Coblenz, Koblenz; Cologne, Köln; Dantzic, Dantzig; France, Frankreich; Frankfort, Frankfurt am Main, the Hague, Haag; Hesse, Hessen; Mayence, Mainz; Mulhouse,

Müllausen; Munich, München; Netherlands, Niederlande; Prussia, Preussen; Rhineland, Rheinland; Saarbruck, Saarbrücken; Saxony, Sachsen; Spain, Spanien; Switzerland, Schweiz; and Germany itself, Das Reich or Deutschland.

The Italians call Antwerp, Anversa; England, Inghilterra; Florence, Firenze; France, Francia; Genoa, Genova; the Hague, L'Aja; Leghorn, Livorno; London, Londra; Mantua, Mantova; Milan, Milano; Naples, Napoli; Padua, Padova; Rome, Roma; Spain, Spagna; Turin, Torino; Venice, Venezia; and Italy itself, Italia.

The Spanish call Antwerp, Amberes; Barcelona, Barña; Cartagena, Cartagena; Cordova, Córdoba; Corunna, Coruña; England, Inglaterra; France, Francia; London, Londres; Madrid, Corte; Saragossa, Zaragoza; Seville, Sevilla; and Spain itself, España.

Prague, the capital of Czecho-Slovakia, is to Central Europeans, Praha; and Vienna is Wien.

SOCIAL FORMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Formal notes, announcements, invitations, and the like, are expressed in the third person and are usually given the decorative (irregularly indented) set when engraved. Salutation and complimentary closing are omitted. Dates are written out. The inside address is placed at the lower lefthand corner, as is also the date of sending when included. A reply to a formal invitation always repeats the date and hour mentioned in the invitation. The initials *R.S.V.P.* or *R.s.v.p.* (*Répondez s'il vous plaît* or *Reply if you please*) are placed in the lower lefthand corner of such formal messages as require replies. Announcements follow events. Invitations precede events. Invitations to church weddings do not as a rule require replies, but to home weddings they do. Separate cards should be used to invite guests to a reception following a wedding. Impersonal invitations and announcements are engraved in full; personal ones have blank spaces in which to write names. Details of such forms may well be left to the engraver or stationer, who is able to give expert advice as to style and fashion in such forms. He will know whether roman, gothic, or script should be used, will be able to relate all the social forms of a family typographically, and may be depended upon to indicate correct forms of address.

The difference between a formal and an informal invitation may be illustrated by comparing some of the following forms with the two delightful "regrets" by Sydney Smith on page 276.

Special Church Invitations

The Reverend Joseph Donaldson
Ordained to the Holy Priesthood
by the
Most Reverend Thomas Machern, D.D.
Sunday, November eighteenth
nineteen hundred and forty-four
Archiepiscopal Chapel, Cleveland
invites you to be present at his
First Solemn Mass
on Sunday, December thirtieth
at eleven o'clock
Church of Saint Joseph
Cleveland
Ohio

The Reverend Patrick Gillan
cordially invites you to be present at
his Ordination to the Holy Priesthood
to be conferred by the
Most Reverend Francis Kehoe, D.D.
on
Saturday morning, March the twenty second
nineteen hundred and forty-four
at eight-fifteen o'clock
Cathedral of Saint Ignatius
Wayne
Ohio

Announcements of Engagements

Engagements are generally announced verbally or by private letters to friends, but formal announcements such as these are sometimes used:

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

Mr. and Mrs. Horace Winterburn
 announce the betrothal of their niece
 Miss Eva Frances Carl
 to
 Mr. Charles Vanderpool
 Ensign, United States Navy

Lensanoako
 April Twelfth

Mr. and Mrs. Montague Montalvo
 have the honour to announce the
 betrothal of their daughter
 Maud Elizabeth
 to
 Mr. Henry Haverill

Stony Ridge
 Hartsville
 Pennsylvania

*Announcement of Engagement and Reception by Mother and
 Stepfather*

Mr. and Mrs. Julius Eisemann
 announce the engagement of their daughter
 Miss Jane Levy
 to
 Mr. Moe Rosenbaum
 Reception
 Sunday, February tenth
 from four until seven o'clock
 at the
 Hotel Copley-Plaza
 Boston

Announcements of the Breaking of Engagements

Mr. and Mrs. Horace Winterburn
 announce the annulment of the engagement of their niece
 Miss Eva Frances Carl
 to
 Mr. Charles Vanderpool
 Ensign, United States Navy

Lensanoako
 November Third
 Nineteen Hundred Forty-four

You are hereby notified
that the engagement of
Miss Jane Levy
to
Mr. Moe Rosenbaum
has been broken
June Twelfth

*Impersonal Invitation Issued by a Widow for Her Daughter's
Wedding*

Mrs. Henry Harrison Blanchard
requests the honour of your presence
at the marriage of her daughter
Martha
to
Mr. Howard Lawson Chamberlain
on the evening of Friday, January the Fifth
at seven o'clock
at the residence of her brother Mr. James Harrison
Fifty-five Maple Avenue
Doylestown Pennsylvania

Reception Invitation Enclosed in the Above Wedding Invitation

Mrs. Henry Harrison Blanchard
requests the pleasure of your company
at the wedding reception of her daughter
Martha
and
Mr. Howard Lawson Chamberlain
on the evening of Friday, January the Fifth
at half after seven o'clock
at the residence of her brother Mr. James Harrison
Fifty-five Maple Avenue
Doylestown Pennsylvania

R.S.V.P.

A Wedding Announcement from Both Sides of the House

MADAME VEUVE OTTO THOMSEN
 MONSIEUR ET MADAME JACQUES COPEAU
 ONT L'HONNEUR DE VOUS FAIRE PART
 DU MARIAGE DE LEUR PETITE FILLE ET
 FILLE MARIE-HÉLÈNE AVEC MONSIEUR
 JEAN DASTÉ DU VIEUX COLOMBIER

MADAME VEUVE ANTOINE BONTEMPS
 MONSIEUR ET MADAME GEORGES DASTE
 ONT L'HONNEUR DE VOUS FAIRE PART
 DU MARIAGE DE LEUR PETIT FILS ET
 FILS JEAN AVEC MADEMOISELLE MARIE-
 HÉLÈNE COPEAU DU VIEUX COLOMBIER

LA BÉNÉDICTION NUPTIALE LEUR A ÉTÉ DONNÉE
 DANS L'INTIMITÉ LE TROIS JANVIER 1938
 EN L'ÉGLISE DE FERNAND-VERGELESSES

FERNAND-VERGELESSES (COTE-D'OR)

82, BOULEVARD DE CHAMPAIGNE - PARIS

Invitation Issued by a Widow for Her Wedding

The honour of your presence is requested
 at the marriage of
 Mrs. Howard Thompson Kneeland
 (née Brinton)
 to
 Mr. Floyd Raymond Fitch
 on the afternoon of Tuesday, December Third
 at four o'clock
 Westminster Presbyterian Church
 Exeter, New Hampshire

Invitation to a Double Wedding

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Blake
request the honour of
presence at the marriage of their daughters
Mary Elizabeth
to
Mr. Paul Torregiani
and
Evelyn May
to
Mr. William Anderson Pye
on Thursday, the twentieth of September
at seven o'clock in the evening
at 251 South Kensington Avenue
Denver, Colorado

Illustrating the Use of Titles

Reverend (or Doctor or Captain) and Mrs. Thomas Binns
request the honour of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Jane Katheryn
to
Mr. Stanley Lee Thanor
Lieutenant, United States Army
on Wednesday afternoon, June Twenty-third
One thousand nine hundred and forty-four
at half after three o'clock
The Collegiate Church
Haverford, Pennsylvania

Invitation to the Wedding Reception of Daughter by Divorced Couple

Mr. Maurice Wertheim
and Mrs. Paul Lester Wiener
request the pleasure of

company at the marriage reception of their daughter
Josephine Alma

and

Mr. Ralph Pomerance
on the afternoon of Friday, the eighth of June
at four o'clock
33 East Seventieth Street
New York

P. S. V. P.

Wedding Invitation Issued by the Bride's Brother

Mr. Spencer Fraymore Briggs
requests the honour of your presence
at the marriage of his sister
Mrs. Thomas Briggs Jay
to

Mr. Anthony Manson
at high noon, April Fifteenth
Nineteen hundred forty-four
St George's Chapel
Exeter England

Wedding Invitation Issued by Contracting Parties, the Bride's Parents Being Dead

The honour of your presence is requested
at the marriage of

Mrs. Thomas Gray Radnor
formerly Grace Sylvia Conard
to

Mr James Buckner
on the afternoon of May twenty-third
at half after four o'clock
Trinity Chapel
Ogdenville Maryland

Wedding Announcement

Mr. and Mrs. Hanneford Renée La Montagne
have the honour to announce
the marriage of their daughter
Elise
to
Mr. Lee Laidlaw Stevenson
on the tenth of April
one thousand nine hundred forty-four
in Housatonic, Massachusetts

Typical Birth Announcements

Birth announcements are by no means in general use, but the following illustrate the forms that are sometimes sent out. Sometimes a tiny card, bearing the baby's name, is attached by ribbon to the visiting cards of the parents.

It's a BOY Eight Pounds
Harold Brewer Erickson
Born May Fifth
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ray Erickson

Harold Brewer Erickson
Born May the Fifth
Nineteen Hundred Forty-four
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ray Erickson

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ray Frickson
have the honor to announce to
the birth of a son
Thomas Ray Erickson, junior
on Monday, June the Eighth
Nineteen Hundred Forty-four

Invitation to Meet a Particular Person

Mrs. Mary Frances Dearborn
requests the pleasure of your company
on Tuesday, May Fifteenth
at three o'clock
Thirty-two Lenox Avenue
New York City
To meet Miss Adelaide Grainger

Invitation to Breakfast

Doctor and Mrs. Jonas Appleby
invite you to join them
at Breakfast
at half after twelve o'clock
May thirtieth
The Pines

Please Respond

Special At-Home Announcement and Invitation

Major and Mrs. Reginald Thompson
will be at home
on Tuesday evening, April first
from eight-thirty
to
eleven o'clock
Three hundred twelve Beacon Street
Boston Massachusetts

General At-Home Announcement and Invitation

Reverend and Mrs. Benjamin Bartley
At Home
after February first
Twenty Park Avenue
New York City

Announcement of Separation

The announcement is made
of the complete separation
of Mr. and Mrs. John DeForest
and the custody of her

two children, Margarite and Alice

Mrs. Agnes Marion DeForest

Houston, Texas
June 3, 0000

Announcement of Divorce

By authority of the decree of divorce of the
Supreme Court of the State of New York
granted to me, dated July the seventh,
one thousand nine hundred and forty-four,
I have elected to resume my maiden name
and to be known as Mrs. Jane Mattison
Jane M. Collings.

34 East Thirtieth Street
New York City
June the eighteenth

Acknowledgment Cards—Acceptances, Regrets, and So Forth

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lee Bronson accept with pleasure
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rogers' kind invitation for dinner,
Thursday evening, March tenth, Nineteen hundred forty-four
at seven o'clock.

Greylock Lodge
March second

Mr. Stanley Rayburn accepts with pleasure
Mrs. Arnold Gluck's kind invitation for the evening
of Thursday, May fifteenth, from eight until ten o'clock

Queens Hall
May tenth

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

Doctor and Mrs. Willard Lee Finney
accept with pleasure

kind invitation to meet

on Thursday afternoon, June the tenth
at Thirty Park Place
Brooklyn New York City

Captain and Mrs. Roger Blumenstein
regret that a previous engagement
makes it impossible to accept

kind invitation to attend the

in honor of

on

at

Evergreen Lodge
Littledale, Maryland

The inimitable Sydney Smith could add spice even to the most conventional of formal notes. The "regrets" below may be compared to their incalculable advantage with such forms as are reproduced above. The first of the following notes was written to Mrs. Meynell, the second to Miss Berry. Both women were prominent in social and literary circles in Sydney Smith's time.

Thy servant is threescore-and-ten years old; can he bear the sound of singing men and singing women? A Canon at the Opera? Where have you lived? In what habitations of the heathen? I thank you, shuddering; and am ever your unseducible friend,

SYDNEY SMITH

Engaged, my dear Miss Berry, up to the teeth on Saturday, or should be too happy. It gives me great comfort that you are recovered. I would not have survived you. To precipitate myself from the pulpit of Paul was the peculiar mode of destruction on which I had resolved.

Ever yours,
SYDNEY SMITH

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lee Bronson regret that they are unable to accept Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rogers' kind invitation for dinner, Thursday evening, March fifteenth, at seven o'clock, owing to a previous engagement.

Greylock Lodge
March second

Miss Thomasina Smith regrets her inability to accept the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Harry M. Shook to be present at the marriage of their daughter Margery to Mr. Leon Mollet, on Tuesday evening, June the seventh, nineteen hundred forty-four, at seven o'clock.

Dragolinden Chambers
May thirteenth

Mr. Harrison Mabie gratefully acknowledges your expression of sympathy in his recent bereavement

Mr. and Mrs. Thompson Ellis thank you for your expression of sympathy in their recent bereavement

The members of the family of the late James Boardman gratefully acknowledge your kind expression of sympathy

Please accept my grateful acknowledgment of your congratulatory greeting

Enclosed in a Wedding Invitation

Reception immediately following the ceremony at the Hotel Adlon

Reception from eight-thirty until ten o'clock at thirty-one T Street

Please present this card at St. Paul's Chapel

will please present this card at the Chantry of St. George's on Friday, the thirteenth of June
Seat number—

At-Home Cards

At Home
after March first
Twenty-four Park Avenue
New York City

At Home
Tuesdays after March first
at
Thirty-nine Clark Street
Baltimore Maryland

Miscellaneous Social Cards

Miss Mary Hartley Anderson
acknowledges with thanks your wedding gift
and will write you personally at an early
date to express her appreciation of your
kindness

Announcing the Death of
Robert Trainor Archibald
Born May Third 1880 Died February First 1944
Services at his Late Residence
12 Witherspoon Avenue
Philadelphia, Pa.
Thursday Evening, February Third, at Eight O'clock

Relatives and Friends of the Late
Robert Coe Benson
Are Invited to Attend Religious
Services in his Memory
at
Grace Church
Grant and Wycombe Avenues
Friday Afternoon at Three O'Clock
October Tenth

*Owing to the death of the sister of
Miss
the invitations issued for Friday
afternoon, October twenty-first, are
recalled by
Mrs.*

*Owing to the sudden death of
Miss sister
Mrs. recalls
the invitations issued for Sunday
afternoon, October twenty-first*

Business Announcements of the Death of a Member of a Firm

Jameson, Lee, and Company
announce with profound sorrow
the death of

Mr. Harrison Compter
for twenty-five years
a loyal and beloved
Member of this Firm
on Tuesday, June twentieth
at his late residence
Wilmington Delaware

We announce with deep regret
the death of

Mr. Martin Bronson
Vice-President of our firm
on Friday, June twenty-fifth
at his home

Radnor Pennsylvania

Penn Mutual Insurance
Company, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania

It is with deep regret
that The Wechsler-Adams Company
announces the death of its President
Charles Towner Adams
at Springfield, Illinois
on Tuesday, January twenty-seventh
For thirty years he has served this
company in official capacity with
unwavering faithfulness and uncom-
promising loyalty

Owing to the sudden death of
James Henderson
Senior Member of this firm
on Thursday, June the tenth
at his home in Philadelphia
these offices will be closed
until Monday, June fourteenth

Brown, Henderson, and
Alderschott, Attorneys-
at-law

Miscellaneous Business Announcements

HAROLD BANKFORT
MODERN DESIGNER
Announces his removal to
321 Green Avenue, Chicago,
on September first

TELEPHONE

RA - 6 - 4108

DR. ROBERT CLAY DONALDSON**ANNOUNCES HIS SUCCESSION TO THE PRACTISE OF****DR. JAMES RAYMOND SPENCER****WITH WHOM HE HAS BEEN INTIMATELY ASSOCIATED
FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS****OFFICE HOURS****FROM ONE TO THREE P.M.****FROM EIGHT TO NINE P.M.****DAILY****332 CLARKE STREET****BROOKLYN, NEW YORK***Announcing.***BLAINE AND CONARD'S****New Stationery and Engraving Service****REPRESENTING EXCLUSIVELY****BOUESSEVAN OF PARIS****LETTER PAPER****VISITING CARDS****INVITATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR ALL
OCCASIONS****SPECIAL HOLIDAY AND CEREMONIAL FORMS**

AINSWORTH AND HARRISON

Clothiers

25 GRAND AVENUE DENVER

invite your inspection
of their

NEW FALL AND WINTER SUITINGS

A completely new line of patterns
in woollen goods under varied
lightings and in combination with
haberdashery coloring and make-ups

.....

Saturdays all day
Wednesdays until nine

Radio City Music Hall

Rocketeller Center New York

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

ALL SEATS in the first mezzanine of the Music Hall are reserved for all performances. Patrons may telephone, write, or call, and may thus be assured the choicest seats, afternoon and evening.

THIS CONVENIENCE especially appeals to those who wish to attend the theater after a leisurely dinner. The Music Hall is the only New York playhouse where reserved seats may be secured for a performance beginning at nine fifteen p.m.

SMOKING is permitted. Columbus 5-6535.

The Hale Community House Sculpture Committee

requests the honor of your presence

at the

TWELFTH ANNUAL SHOWING

of

Sculptures Done in Soap, Clay, Putty, and Cement

by the

CHILDREN OF THE HOUSE

18 Foraker Square

June Third to June Eighth Inclusive

Nine to Five Daily

The Janes Company

REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF YOUR PRESENCE

AT THE

PREMIER PERFORMANCE

OF

Better Than Gold

THE FIRST FULL-LENGTH DRAMATIC COMPOSITION WRITTEN
FOR EXCLUSIVE BROADCAST PRODUCTION

THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER TENTH, AT HOME

THROUGH THE FACILITIES

OF

The International Radio Distribution Company

BOOK BY ANDREW J. BRAINERD

DIRECTION BY STEPHEN DAND

CAST INCLUDING MARY STEWART,

ROGER WORTHING, LEE TRAINOR,

WILLIAM SIMPSON, AND RAY RAY

8:30 EASTERN STANDARD TIME

7:30 CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

6:30 MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME

5:30 PACIFIC STANDARD TIME

SUBSEQUENT RADIO PRESENTATIONS
WILL BE BROADCAST AT THE SAME
HOURS EVERY THURSDAY EVENING
UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF
THE JANES COMPANY

Smith & Richardson
Clothiers

Sixty-seven Young Street

*invite your inspection
of their*

New Fall Goods

*These goods are manufactured by our own
woolen mills and are new and
strictly up-to-date*

*Our clerks will be pleased to see you whether
you come to buy or look around*

*Open Wednesday and Saturday
evenings until nine*

Words

that changed the face of the World!

Dramatic utterances in the history of civilization. Do you remember who said them and what happened?

- "There never was a good war or a bad peace."
- "A majority can never replace The Man!"
- "What hath God wrought?"
- "We have only just begun to fight."
- "All men are created equal."



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STANDARD
DICTIONARY**
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The measure of a man is his use of words. The measure of a dictionary is its choice of words. No dictionary can include all the words in the language . . . many are obsolete and therefore useless. The New Standard Dictionary is a friendly guide to the living language. It saves time because it is easy to use. Every word and fact are just where you would expect to find them—in one alphabetical order. Four years of time and more than \$1,500,000. in money were spent in its production. Over 380 editors and specialists were engaged upon it. It has nearly 3,000 pages; gives over 455,000 living vocabulary terms; contains over 7,000 illustrations, and many colored plates; has important features not found in any other dictionary.

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Write for free copy of "Dictation Facts," No. 15: Romance in the Dictionary.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, Publishers, 354-360 Fourth Avenue, N. Y.

Visiting Cards

MRS. HAROLD RANDOLPH CURTIS
THE MISSES CURTIS

MRS. HAROLD RANDOLPH CURTIS
MISS CURTIS
MISS HARRIET BROWN CURTIS

(The forms above may be used when a mother introduces her two daughters to society at the same time. The older daughter's first name is not used)

MRS. CURTIS

MR. HAROLD RANDOLPH CURTIS

(This simple form of the woman's card is used when she is recognized socially as the senior social leader of her family)

Business, Official, and Professional Cards

With the compliments of
MR. JOHN CALLAN O'LAUGHLIN
Dean, Oñativia, and Company
Woodward Building
Washington, D. C.
Telephone Main 2040

LORD & TAYLOR
Founded 1826

L. E. Weisgerber

MR. STEPHEN TYNG MATHER

Director
National Park Service
Department of the Interior

CLAUDE F. GUYANT
Consul of the United States
of America

Lima, Peru

CAPTAIN MARK ELDREDGE
Quartermaster Corps
National Army

MAJOR JAMES MARCELLUS HOBSON
United States Infantry
Military Attaché
Legation of the United States
of America
Havana

THE RT. REV. WILLIAM T. RUSSELL, D.D.
The Bishop of Charleston

NICETA ZAMORA
Third Secretary of the Spanish
Embassy
Washington

VICE ADMIRAL
SIR IOWTHER AND LADY GRANT
H.M.S. Warrior

LORD LEE OF FAREHAM
Admiralty House
Whitehall

ADOLFO BALLIVIÁN
Envoyé Extraordinaire et
Ministre Plénipotentiaire
de Bolivie

ERNEST GREENWOOD

American Representative
International Labour Office
Geneva, Switzerland

618 Seventeenth Street
Washington, D. C.
Telephone Main 333

WORK

Write and arrange the following business letter parts correctly:

- 1 Messrs Wiston Packing co
938 Penn. aven. Wash
d.C. 25
Sirs,—
- 2 Mr. John Wanamaker esq
8th st. & Brdw'y
N.Y.city 3
My Dear Sir:—
- 3 Nat. Assoc of office execs.
1224 5th Av. New York C.
Att Mr G.Forbes 29
Dear Sir;
- 4 Miss Edith Sutton 310 42nd
St. Buffalo, N. Y.
Dear Miss,
- 5 Dr. Harrison Bangs ;Sec.
C/O Irving Trust co.
34th St.—5th Aven.
N.Y.C. 1
- 6 Yrs very Truely;
Martin J. Baker,esq
TC/MJB two enclosures
- 7 Respectively yrs
Empire state Plate Glass co
Nelson P. King secretary
DD/11R/NPK
- 8 Yours friendly
Kelly Springfield Tire co.
J Roy McNamara
Assistant to the adver-
tising manager
DW:JRMCL Encl
- 9 Sincerely yrs.;
Harrison Jones L.L.D.
Editor & manager
The Wholesaler
MP—Harrison Jones
- 10 oxforduniversitypress14fifth
avenuenewyorkcitypublishersand
booksellersschoolcollegeandgen-
eralpublicationsmay231940gen-
tlemenneweraointingcompany
25northkingstreetlancasterpenna
verytrulyyoursjhamiltonsmith
salesmanagerandsecretaryfor•
oxforduniversitypressjhscfour
enclosures
- 11 "Unscramble" the following complete letter; that is, set it up in perfect letter form. Your task is exclusively one of arrangement, capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing. Omit nothing. Add nothing. It is a complete letter requiring only a perfect set-up. Classify the letter after you have assembled it properly.

theaccounthasthereforebeenopenedinyourname
andyouhaveeveryassuranceofourdesiretoplease
youverytrulyyoursthankyouverymuchforyour
requesttoopenanaccountwithusharoldbrewster
hbsswehavemadeinquiryofthereferencesyouso
kindlyfurnishedandtherepliesareineachcase
satisfactorycreditmanagerdearmrscochranthe
enclosedcardwillexplain toyouthemechanical
detailsofmaintainingacreditaccountatourshop
youwillnotethatstatementsaresentmonthlyto
allcreditcustomersandthatbillsareduewhen
renderedjanuary171940mooreandlittledalenew
yorkpoughkeepsiesuperiormerchandiserswe
thankyouformakingthisrelationshippossible
forusandwehopethatyouwillfindourserviceall
thatwearetryingtomakeitinyourbehalfweare
alwaysopentoconsultationintheeventofspecial
requestsofanykindonthe part of our credit customers
mrsjamescochranpoughkeepsienewyork324wickershamstreet

- 12 Point out *ten* specific errors in the following letter and comment briefly upon each error mentioned. Then (1) rewrite the letter correctly (2) reproduce the letter to which it is a reply.

THE GRAYSON ELECTRICAL COMPANY
ROCHESTER
NEW YORK

6/2

Messrs. Howard Everett & Co.
322 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Sirs:

We have your favor of the 30th ultimo and contents duly noted. In reply we beg to advise you that we have discontinued the manufacture of the number about which you make inquiry. Same was found to be not satisfactory by many of our dealers, who reported that the apparatus contained too many delicate parts.

We are presenting a new model which is of sturdier build and which is equipped with the additional feature of an automatic control. Moreover, we are protecting the dealer by extending him our guaranty for six months' satisfactory service.

We are enclosing herein an illustrated circular. This little leaflet also gives you a price list of this model, which is available in various sizes. Hoping we may be favored with your esteemed transactions, we are,

Yours very cordially,

WILLIAM THOMPSON

Sales Manager
The Grayson Electrical
Company

TS/WT

- 13 The marginal numbers below stand opposite lines in which there are slips or errors or "violations of preference" in English form or expression (or both). Copy these numbers on your paper. After each number thus copied explain what is wrong and what correction (or corrections) should be made in the corresponding line. Then rewrite this claim letter in correct form and tone. Write a good collection-adjustment reply to it.

1231 Sycamore Avenue
Washington, D. C.
October 00, 0000.

1

Havemeyer Emporium

2 5th Street and Grand Boulevard
Washington, D. C.

3 Dear Sir:—

4 Your collection series have been received. As a matter
5 of fact I have postponed taking up with you the little
6 matter of my bill until all the letters came. Now that
7 I have received it, lets talk turkey

8 In the first place, I requested an itemized statement
9 which you have never granted

10 In the second place I have a credit of \$28. and fifty cts
11 with you but its never been placed to my acct.

12 Thirdly (as my revered step grandpa used to say) the dinning
13 room set I bought was not as advertised—you advertised
14 it for \$100 and you charge me \$125 for it. I showed
15 your salesman who said he would make note of it

16 Fourthly the oilstove was broken on delivery. You say you
17 called three times for it to make it right. Sorry, but
18 this was your error. Am I to make a recluse of myself
19 pending the whimsies of your delivery dept.?

20 Fifthly (and we'll call it a day) there is a number of other
21 little things out of joint—O cursed spite!—with the total
22 amount you say and still probably think I owe you. I would
23 appreciate you trying to get them right. If and when you do
24 I'll consider sending you a check.

25
26

Respectively
DAME VAN WINKLE.
(Mrs. Ripley Van Winkle)

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LETTER AND THE APPLICANT

The good business letter begins with the subject to be discussed. It makes immediate connection between the prospective reader and the thing the writer has to say to him. Remote introductory matter is distinctly out of place. This applies nowhere with greater emphasis than in letters that have to do with selling personal efficiency, making introductions, and recommending one person to another.

Age, nationality, purpose in writing, education, experience, salary expected (if requested), references, copies of recommendations, arrangement for interview (if suggested) are the principal content of a letter of application. It must be made to look well and to look important. This means that good stationery should be used, preferably of the larger commercial size, and that the letter should be typewritten. Care should be exercised to avoid an aggressive l-tone, but at the same time the writer should write in a strong and confident vein, otherwise he may be thought weak, timid, and inferior. He should be most thoro in analyzing the situation which evokes his letter, be it a help-wanted advertisement or an opportunity of which he has heard thru a friend or other source. He would do well to analyze himself in relation to the kind of opportunity that is offered, to the end that he may be able to write a letter that will "dovetail" with the requirements of the job. He should say nothing that he cannot support; that is, proof of education mentioned, proof of experience claimed, proof of achievements listed to further his chances, should be borne out by references or copies of enclosed recommendations, or both.

Two particular kinds of recommendation are usually considered important. One pertains to character and reputation; one to education and experience. The former kind is general; the latter should be made special to the position for which the application is made. The letters of application reproduced below vary in form and content but bear out in general these principles. The seriatim letter is usually considered better than the one that is set solid, but either style is permissible and the latter may be quite as good as the former. References should be listed in the order

in which the writer desires them considered, and all enclosures should be firmly clipped together so that the whole communication will constitute a unity and nothing will be lost. In practically all applications automatic reply should be arranged for—stamps or, better, a stamped, addressed envelope. (Do not use the term *self-addressed* in reference to an enclosed addressed envelope.)

In introductions, the introduction proper should come first. This should be followed with the reason for making it, with a word or two about the person introduced, and with whatever request the introduction entails. In recommendations it is customary to list a few qualities first, and then to treat each one individually but briefly.

Do not use such expressions as these in letters of application (see page 111):

In reply to your ad in the morning —— I beg to submit the following

Trusting that I shall have the pleasure and the profit of a favorable reply

I shall expect —— dollars a week. (It is much better to say what you have been getting and what your working conditions are)

I have had three years in the banking business. (This is too general. Say exactly what department you worked in and what your specific tasks were)

Do not use such expressions as these in letters of introduction:

I take pleasure in presenting

I have the honor to introduce

Permit me to give you

It affords me great satisfaction to introduce

Do not use such expressions as these in letters of recommendation:

I consider it a privilege to recommend to your notice

He is worthy of the greatest possible trust and confidence

It gives me great pleasure to recommend to your entire satisfaction Mr. ——

I consider it an honor to give testimony in behalf of his high character and outstanding ability.

In reply to this advertisement

WANTED—A well trained, experienced stenographer, one with some legal knowledge preferred, tho work to be done is strictly commercial. State education, experience, age, nationality, present employment and salary, reason for application, and references. Twaddell and Cousins, 1233 Market Street, Philadelphia.

one applicant wrote as follows:

It would be a mistake to overlook me in filling the position you advertise in the morning *Inquirer*.

I am AI in every respect. It would almost seem that you must have had me in mind when you penned that little masterpiece for the Help Wanted column. Give me a ring—MT 0-0000—and I shall make it possible for you to see me.

My photograph is enclosed. Salary of \$50. weekly will be considered.

and another did this:

My achievements in the realm of Pitmanization have been noised hither and yon, and I am accordingly indelibly impressed with your restrained solicitation in the morning publications for a stenographical secretarial amanuensis.

Fortunately I am at the present juncture a member of the regimentation of unemployed, and am therefore at liberty to consolidate my interests with your own at a moment's notification. Both by educational attainment and experiential service I am preeminently qualified to render you superlative performances in the acknowledged artistry of abbreviated communication.

but a third wrote this and got the job:

May I ask you, please, to consider the following in connection with your advertisement for a stenographer in this morning's *Inquirer*:

- 1 My average rate of speed is one hundred words a minute in straight copy, accuracy guaranteed.
- 2 At the time I was graduated from high school I held the record in the State for speed and accuracy.
- 3 After leaving high school I attended Blair College for two years, where I served as part-time secretary to the President, thus earning my tuition.
- 4 For two years I was chief stenographer to the Court of Special Sessions in this city, and for the past two years I have been serving in the same capacity with the well-known law firm of Brown and Inglesby, 25 Market Street.
- 5 I am twenty-five years of age, American born, and live at home with my family. My present salary is thirty-five dollars a week.

- 6 My application is made to you because your advertisement indicates that you are a commercial house. I do not want to continue longer now in legal stenography, for the reason that I feel I know it well enough. It is excellent training for a young stenographer but my aim is to be a generalist in my field, not a specialist.
- 7 You may address my present employers to ask any special questions about my qualifications and efficiency. You may also write to President Cummings of Blair College, Brookston, Penna., and to the Principal of Calvin High School in this city. I enclose, however, copies of recommendations from all of them.

Inasmuch as my present employers are aware that I am looking for an opportunity to broaden my training and service in stenography they have very kindly arranged to permit me to absent myself from the offices for a short time on any day that I may be called for interview. If therefore you care to talk with me, please let me know and I shall be able and glad to call at your convenience. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

This application is frank and honest without being aggressive:

Re your advertisement in the morning *Bee*:

The following data will serve to show that my training and experience tally with the requirements of your advertisement.

<i>Age</i>	Twenty-four.
<i>Family</i>	American for five generations, living with parents.
<i>Education</i>	Wells High School graduate, commercial course. Towne Industrial College, B.C.I.. degree.
<i>Employment</i>	Since graduation from college, with the corporation law firm of Carstell and Barnaby, 181 Walsh Avenue, in the capacity of consultant on records.
<i>References</i>	Dr. Andrew Borden, Principal Wells High School, this city. President Charles R. Marston, Towne Industrial College, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Archibald Carstell, Esq., senior partner of the law firm above referred to.
<i>Salary</i>	I have been receiving fifty dollars a week straight in addition to monthly commissions on work that I have been able to bring in to the firm. These have amounted to about fifteen dollars weekly.
<i>Reason for Application</i>	My present connection holds little promise for the reason that three of the members of the firm have sons who are nearly ready to enter it. I am one who will be automatically supplanted, and I am simply looking ahead—and hoping.

It is possible for me to call to talk with you briefly at almost any time, day or evening. I enclose copies of both scholastic and service recommendations, and you are at perfect liberty to consult the writers

THE LETTER AND THE APPLICANT 297

of these further in regard to me. Their addresses are enclosed, and I attach to each recommendation a stamp for your use.

This is a good application written in reply to a personal letter rather than to a newspaper advertisement:

Thank you for your letter. It is very kind of you to remember my telling you that I should some day like to work for you. Father thinks it is a great opportunity you offer me, and, needless to say, I do too.

You want to know my qualifications. I shall give them to you seriatim:

- 1 My tastes and aptitudes All of my instructors have told me that I am "mechanically inclined." I hope they are right, for I love a workshop and machinery and the handling of tools.
- 2 My education I finished the machine-shop course at Dakin High in three years, and was graduated from Dale Technical Institute last June. At both places I was first honor man, and at the latter I perfected the water-hot device that you mention in your letter and that has just this week been patented. For these reasons I think I shall fit into your factory especially well.
- 3 My ambitions Well, I should first like to "make good" with you, I suppose. Then I want to work out another idea or two of my own in the line of water heating and heat retention. If and when this comes to pass, I shall give you dignified notice and set up for myself! But this is a long way off, I assure you, so please don't allow it to make any difference in the present situation.
- 4 My wages Whatever you say will be satisfactory to me. As you know, I have worked for the past four summers in the Graves Laboratories and received thirty dollars a week. The important thing is to have steady work at an open job. I mean at a job that consists of something more than blind routine. I am not mentioning this for selfish reasons, but because I know I can give you better service in such a job.

I *think* this answers your letter fully. And I do hope I haven't said anything wrong, for I am looking forward with enthusiasm to being a workman in overalls in your big and important place.

This letter is what the theater would call CASTING AGAINST TYPE. It is unusual, certainly, to apply for a job for which an advertise-

ment tells you you are not wanted. But this is a winning example, and deservedly.

Your advertisement in today's *Leader* calls for a road salesman to sell children's wear. I hope you won't mind my answering it—and applying for the job—especially if I am able to prove to you that I can hold my own with any man on the road? If I am able to do this, will you give me a trial?

I have sold children's wear for the Transblower Company for the past five years. Each year my sales have shown an increase of at least fifteen per cent over those of the preceding year. This year I lead the sales force of twelve women and eighteen men.

This record has been made on long hard road trips up and down the country, in all sorts of weather, in face of all kinds of competition, and with never a day's illness or a penny's loss in old trade. I ask no concessions in this business of selling shoulder to shoulder with men on the road. It's hard, I admit. But all work is. And I've studied the road as I've studied men and their methods of selling, and if you think that, just because I'm a woman, I expect concessions, then please just give me a chance to try to prove to you that I don't.

Perhaps your advertisement reads as it does because you have never yet hired women. This is a day when traditions just have to come down off their pedestals, isn't it? Isn't a woman just as quick and intuitive about getting a buyer's point of view as a man is, especially when the article for sale is children's wear? Can a man talk color and quality and price and smartness and values better than a woman, think you, when it comes to selling anything for *children*? I don't believe he can, and all I ask is a chance to prove to you that I am right about this.

Perhaps I want to make a change just because your advertisement got under my skin a little. I don't know. And this isn't important. What is important tho is this: I have studied the business you conduct. I doubt whether you yourself have studied it any harder than I have, and you are a boss and I'm merely a "roadster." But I see in your business a great opportunity for a live *saleswoman*. I have a burning ambition to be that woman. I have just about exhausted all the resources that my present job can ever yield. Will you please subordinate your convictions a little and give me a trial?

Here is an application that shows a fine sense of fair play:

Your advertisement in the *Times* today interests me particularly because it seems to call for exactly the qualifications that I have and for exactly the service which I hope to be able to render to some house on my graduation from high school next month when I shall be eighteen years of age. I am American born and live with my parents.

During the last two years of my high school course I have been employed on the cooperative plan, that is, one week in school and one week out of school, working in a business office. For approxi-

THE LETTER AND THE APPLICANT 299

mately seventy-five weeks now I have been the general office assistant at Blaine and Gertner's Emporium, Chelsea Avenue and Pearce Boulevard. Mr. Horace G. Winterburn, my immediate supervisor, will recommend me to your satisfaction I am sure, and I enclose a stamped envelope addressed to him for your convenience in consulting him about me.

My office work during this period has consisted of answering telephone calls, filing letters and other papers, keeping the office day-book, and, during the past year, taking dictation and typing letters. Just at present I am acting as Mr. Winterburn's private secretary also, because of the serious illness of his regular secretary.

I have for the past two years been an honor student at high school and have had two official designations as head boy—once in commercial law and once in stenography and typewriting. I enclose a copy of a letter from Principal Harry S. Wood in which he writes of both my character and my scholarship record.

The position that I hold, cooperatively with an alternate, at Blaine and Gertner's is really a position belonging to the school and not to me, you understand. On my graduation it automatically goes to another cooperative student in the school. It is for this reason that I am now seeking a position. It would not be fair for me to try to hold my present tryout job (tho I think Mr. Winterburn would probably like to have me) for by doing so I should be interfering with some other student's commercial training.

This introduction ought to merit respect—and action:

Miss Jennie Fairman, who brings this letter to you, is a good friend of mine. She is spending the present academic year in Chicago doing graduate work at the University.

She wants to gather some information about highly organized filing systems, and she and I together have decided that a large mail-order concern such as yours is probably the best place to study filing under the most extensive and intensive conditions.

Will you therefore help her a little, please? In so doing you will make a new friend and prove—again—your unfailing loyalty to an old one.

The gentleman will probably be well received and perhaps even entertained:

This will introduce to you Mr. Charles Cadman who is considering your city as a possible location for a branch of his large sewing-machine factory here in Tulsa.

I have known Mr. Cadman for the past twelve years, and I cannot speak too highly of his business integrity, civic spirit, and personal worth.

If you can find it possible to help him a little in getting his bearings in your home town, I shall be very grateful to you.

This is a formal introduction of a general kind usually written on a card:

Introduction of

Mr. Arthur R. Brock

to

Mr. Harrison Foley

by

James B. Ogden

Any courtesies that Mr. Foley can extend to Mr. Brock will be appreciated by his old friend.

JBO

May 3, 0000

These two notes were written by the vice-president of a bank in a large city to two different banks in another city. Note the praiseworthy effort to make them different and yet to make them say the same thing.

1

MR. HARRISON HOADLEY

of New York, a friend and customer of ours for many years, will present this letter to you. It is possible that he will have some business in ——— which will necessitate banking connections, in which case we shall appreciate any courtesies you may extend to him.

2

This letter will be presented to you by

MR. HARRISON HOADLEY

of New York, one of our good friends and a customer of many years' standing. Mr. Hoadley is at the Château Elysée, and has requested our recommendations regarding a bank in your city. We are happy to give him this letter to you, and shall appreciate any courtesies extended him.

This reference note is in part a form and in part a personal letter:

Harry Wayland, Jr., whose photograph is attached, has applied to us for work as designer in our house-construction department.

We require all applicants to supply us with references as to character and ability, and this letter comes to you as result of that policy.

The applicant has referred us to you among others. He says that he has been in your employment for the past four years and that he is leaving you because his family has moved to this city.

Will you please help Mr. Wayland and us by answering the few questions below? A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

—————

1 Are his habits correct?

2 Is he able and industrious?

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- 3 Do you think he can fill satisfactorily the position for which he has applied?
- 4 Can you add anything else in his behalf that will help us in making our decision?

Here is the answer to the foregoing reference inquiry. The questions were not answered formally on the reference-letter sheet but their answers were embodied in a full-length letter of recommendation covering much more than what was asked for.

Have no doubts, please, about Harry Wayland, Jr. He has told you probably only half the truth, as is his modest way when he speaks of himself. It is an important part of his code of good manners not to talk about himself, and he observes it sometimes almost too closely.

Yes, he has been with us for four years. His character and habits are above reproach. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word, and he inspires trust and confidence not only among those for whom he works but also among those with whom he works.

As a designer in the department you mention, he is qualified to make an excellent showing for himself. We fully intended to promote him to the managership of our parallel department, and we told him so two months ago. But he would not permit us to reorganize the department just then in order to promote him because, according to his own analysis, the shifts entailed in doing so would have delayed or embarrassed some strategic operations then under way, and also because he had the feeling that his family would soon make this move. So we doubled his salary, and let him have his own way.

This is merely one of many episodes of which we might inform you, to show the caliber of this chap. He is the sole support of his family, and his father has been an invalid for many years. You will make no mistake in taking him on. If ever you think you have done so, please send him back to us.

This is a combined introduction and recommendation:

The bearer of this note—Miss Alice Fox—is seeking a position with some good long-established business concern.

She is particularly qualified to render efficient service as private secretary in view of the fact that she has for the past two years been employed in this capacity by a college president.

While her training and most of her experience have been academic, she is nevertheless a graduate of a business school as well as a bachelor of arts from Cole College. She is therefore somewhat better qualified than the average applicant for the position of private secretary in business. She is quick, accurate, intelligent, and easily adjustable to new conditions. She holds, I believe, certain records and medals for speed writing. She will tell you about these.

I hope that you will be able to give Miss Fox employment in your office. There will be no regrets on either side of the house, I am sure.

Note in this general recommendation the special salutation form and the absence of a complimentary closing. The general recommendation is always so written.

To whom it may concern:

Mr. Henry Ketterer is a young man of sterling character, unusual ability, and indefatigable industry. He has been employed in our offices for the past five years in a variety of capacities, and he has never evinced anything but the greatest possible confidence in his employers and in their business, and has never rendered anything but the most faithful and efficient service. We are extremely sorry to lose him, especially at this time when work is heavier than ever before and when therefore his help is more necessary than ever.

But a death in his family makes it imperative that he move to Kansas City and make it his home probably for many years to come. Since this is so, we are very much concerned about his finding satisfactory employment there. We are likewise eager to see some excellent concern in Kansas City avail itself of the rare loyalty and industry that he has to offer. To this end we shall always be ready and punctual in making this recommendation special and individual to any man or woman or company that desires us to do so.

CHARLES BUTTERFIELD
President
Leather Products, Inc.

This is a special recommendation, that is, it is a personal letter written in reply to one. The tone of recommendation is somewhat more restrained than it is in the preceding.

The subject of your inquiry has been employed by us for the past two years and a half. He has always been conscientious in discharging whatever duties were assigned to him, and he is honest and loyal in every way, as far as we are able to judge.

Unfortunately we are obliged to dispense with his services, not at all because he is not satisfactory to us, but because we do not feel that we can longer continue the position that he is occupying. By assigning his work fractionally here and there among other older employees, we shall be able to subtract one more item of cost from our budget, which will still be too heavy for these strenuous days. There is nothing personal whatever in his dismissal. It is just one of those misfortunes that are so inextricably linked with the general depression.

We shall do anything that we can to help him find congenial work. You will make no mistake, we think, in assigning him in the manner you propose. But if you do not see your way clear to do this, we shall make effort to place him elsewhere. His domestic situation is said to be rather desperate. But his father and his older brother both secured positions last week after unemployment for over a year.

THE LETTER AND THE APPLICANT 303

*Once in a while—in a great while?—a letter such as this is written and circulated, as indicated. It is the sort of message that gives character to a house and makes employees proud to serve it.*¹

Thank you for your letter of February twelfth in which you commend our representative at the Baltimore and Ohio Station, Mr. James Coater, for the splendid services rendered you.

We are always glad, of course, to learn of instances wherein our employees excel in service, and when the good work of Mr. Coater caused you to take the time to write us so warmly in commendation, you made us happy indeed.

You may be sure that Mr. Coater has been apprised of your letter. It has also been passed along to our executives for their information and satisfaction.

The following letter was written by James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) to Nathaniel Hawthorne, as an introduction-recommendation for William Dean Howells. Lowell's facetious reference to the famous Roman consul Plancus refers to Hawthorne's consulship abroad.

Cambridge, August 5, 1860.

My dear Hawthorne,

I have no masonic claim upon you except community of tobacco, and the young man who brings this does not smoke.

But he wants to look at you, which will do you no harm, and him a great deal of good.

His name is Howells, and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several *poems* in the *Atlantic*, which of course you have never read, because you don't do such things yourself, and are old enough to know better.

When I think how much you might have profited by the perusal of certain verses of somebody who shall be nameless—but, no matter! If my judgment is good for anything this youth has more in him than any of our younger fellows in the way of rhyme.

Of course he can't hope to rival *Consule Planco* men. Therefore let him look at you, and charge it

To yours always,
J. R. LOWELL

It would be trite to refer to Percy Bysshe Shelley as an ardent youth, but it may be desirable to do so in connection with the following letter. He "introduced himself" to William Godwin whom he did not know personally but whose work he admired (and whose daughter he was later to marry). Godwin was a

¹Used by permission of The Western Union Telegraph Company.

dissenting minister and a revolutionary idealist. He came into political and literary prominence with the publication of "Political Justice" in 1793 and the novel "Caleb Williams" in 1794. Shelley of course knew both of these important works. He was twenty years old when he thus introduced himself to Godwin on January 3, 1812. No modern youth ever wrote more enthusiastically to his favorite movie star.

You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction will, nor in all probability ever can, authorize that which common thinkers would call a liberty; it is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep "man at a distance from man," or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communication of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have ardently desired to share, on the footing of intimacy, that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.

Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so; you still live, and, I firmly believe, are still planning the welfare of human kind.

I have but just entered on the scene of human operations; yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short, but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferrible which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young, I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth; do not suppose that this is vanity; I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me—I doubt not, are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin?

I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence; certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire concealment; I may not, in fine have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London, I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in

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such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship; at least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu! I shall earnestly await your answer.

Edward Young (1683-1765) author of the once famous "Night Thoughts," tho he had married Lady Elizabeth Lee who was in favor with Queen Caroline, nevertheless "besieged Court favor" in the following letter to Mrs. Howard (later Lady Suffolk) mistress of George the Second. This letter has at least the seriatim method to recommend it, and it has other businesslike qualities also as a letter of application. It is "dated" Monday Morning, and the salutation is Madam.

I know his majesty's goodness to his servants, and his love of justice in general, so well, that I am confident, if his majesty knew my case, I should not have any cause to despair of his gracious favour to me.

Abilities
Good Manners
Service
Age

Want Sufferings and Zeal	}	for His Majesty
-----------------------------------	---	--------------------

These, madam, are the proper points of consideration in the person that humbly hopes his majesty's favour.

As to *abilities*, all I presume to say is, I have done the best I could to improve them.

As to *good manners*, I desire no favour, if any just objection lies against them.

As for *service*, I have been near seven years in his majesty's, and never omitted any duty in it, which few can say.

As for *age*, I am turned of fifty.

As for *want*, I have no manner of preferment.

As for *sufferings*, I have lost £300 per annum by being in his majesty's service; as I have shown in a *representation* which his majesty has been so good as to read and consider.

As for *zeal*, I have written nothing without showing my duty to their majesties, and some pieces are dedicated to them.

This, madam, is the short and true state of my case. They that make their court to the ministers, and not their majesties, succeed better. If my case deserves some consideration, and you can serve me in it, I humbly hope and believe you will. I shall therefore trouble you no further; but beg leave to subscribe myself, with truest respect and gratitude, yours

PS I have some hope that my Lord Townshend is my friend; if therefore soon, and before he leaves the court, you had an opportunity of mentioning me, with that favour you have been so

good to show, I think it would not fail of success; and, if not, I shall owe you more than any.

WORK

1 Answer the following advertisements:

WANTED: A good private secretary, one well trained in the routine and practice of a large business office, and expert in stenography and typewriting. Must have high-school and preferably some college education. State age, training, experience, special qualifications (if any), and salary expected. The Radway Company, 444 Chestnut Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

WANTED—Bright boys and girls about fifteen years of age, to make themselves generally useful in business offices. Reply in own handwriting explaining exactly how much you know, what you can do, where you have worked before and at what wage, who your parents are, what you intend to study for, how you get along with your teachers and other adults, why you should like to have a full-time or a part-time job just at present, and any other details that you wish considered with your application. Give names and addresses of three people to whom we may write for character and educational qualifications. Address Harold Coe Grainger, Manager, Grainger Employment Service, 325 West Sixteenth Street, New York City.

- 2 A business or industrial house in your community advertises in the local papers for young people who are willing to enter the enterprise at the bottom and work themselves up deservedly. Applicants must have had at least three years of high-school training, and must be willing to be adjudged in large measure by the form and quality of the letter they write in reply to the advertisement. This letter is to be a complete statement of their character and educational qualifications for such an opening. Write the letter.
- 3 We shall assume that your parents have always wanted you to become a lawyer. But you have now pretty surely decided for yourself that the law is not for you, but that you are eminently qualified to become an A1 business man one of these fine days. Without any solicitation whatever—without knowledge that the president of your father's house needs additional help—without your parents' knowing it—you write a letter to the president laying your case fully before him and asking him whether he has now or is likely to have at any time in the near future an opening for a young person of your qualifications who desires more than anything else in the world an opportunity to "make good" in the business of ———. You must mention your parents in this letter. You must mention law. You must, of course, explain fully why you think you will make a good business man. Reproduce your letter.
- 4 The manager of the department in which you work in a department store has told the personnel director that you have been misplaced, that by temperament, and probably by inclination also, you will be able to make a better showing for yourself in a certain other department, and that you should be transferred forthwith

THE LETTER AND THE APPLICANT 307

for your own good and for the good of the service of the store. You protest. You think you are exactly where you ought to be. You think you can do your best work where you are. You think that your education has qualified you to do the work you are now doing, better than you can do the work in the other department. Embody your thoughts and feelings about the matter in a letter to the personnel director. Reproduce the letter that he writes to your department manager, in which he requests that you be given further trial where you are.

- 5 Let it be assumed that you wrote a letter of application in answer to an advertisement. Your application brought a request to call for an interview with the manager of the firm that placed the advertisement. During the course of the interview he asked you to write him again in a day or two, answering certain questions that he asked you during the interview and explaining somewhat fully your ambitions in life—what you think you are best fitted to become, what you are willing to do to realize your ambitions, what justifications you have had in your educational career so far to make you believe that you can achieve in life what you hope to achieve. Write this second letter. Write your original letter of application.
- 6 You have been given the position, we shall say, that you tried very hard to get. For the first month you were satisfied with the salary, you liked the work, and you made friends among the members of your department. But now, in your second month, you have learned that it would have been much better for your eventual advancement in the business—and you wish to remain in the business and to advance—for you to have started on a lower level, with a simpler kind of work, at a lower salary than you are receiving. Your parents and your friends and acquaintances advise you to write the facts of the situation in a courteous letter to the head of the firm. You promised him, when he took you on, that you would “stick” and grow and become, and dedicate your life to his house. Reproduce the letter you write to him. Reproduce his reply to it.
- 7 We shall assume that you have been in business for a number of years, and are now retiring. You are eager, of course, to place your excellent secretary in a position such as her extraordinary merits deserve. It so happens that a friend of yours, Mr. Forbes Roberts, cashier of the Chase National Bank, 57 Broadway, New York City, has told you in private conversation that he is looking for an able, trustworthy, and confidential private secretary.

- 1 Write a letter to Mr. Roberts, recommending your secretary, Miss Alma Bronson, 15 Sterling Place, Brooklyn.
- 2 Write a letter introducing Miss Bronson to Mr. Roberts.
- 3 Write a letter of congratulation to Miss Bronson after she has been employed by Mr. Roberts.
- 4 Write Miss Bronson's letter of gratitude to you. In this letter Miss Bronson draws a little diagram showing just where her office is located and just how the office furniture is placed. Reproduce her diagram. Remember that she has been in your employment so long that she writes you in friendly rather than formal tone.

- 8 Write a point-by-point criticism of the following letter of application. Then rewrite the letter as you think it should be. This kind of application is sometimes called an unsolicited application because it is not evoked by any agency such as an advertisement or a letter.

I have long desired to be associated with your bank in any capacity whatever. I mean by this that I should be willing to begin at the very bottom and to work up. I have heard a great deal of you and I have a good head for figures. At least, my mathematics teachers all told me just before I was graduated from high school last June that I have it in me to make something of myself financially.

I had very high marks in all my subjects at high school but my highest ones were always in mathematics—arithmetic, algebra, bookkeeping. In history and economics I did not do so well. But I have always thought this was because I stood so firmly for capitalism in all our class discussions while some of the others (and I think even my teacher) leaned a little too much toward radical socialism. At least I gathered this impression, but my parents would not have me mention it for the world. So please regard the matter as strictly confidential. But to get back to my job in your bank: I am perfectly willing to begin as messenger if you like, and then ultimately work myself up to something really big and worthwhile in a financial way. For after all, money is the principal thing in life, isn't it?

I am nineteen now and have been working for Western Union for the past six months. Formerly I worked for the Postal Telegraph, but the manager and I just reached the point where we could not see the service from the same angle at all. So it was up to me to withdraw without too much ado. I'm like that. I'm not one to intrude. If things do not go right I believe it is the better policy to withdraw, don't you?

At any rate, I hope you will give me your best consideration and permit me to come in to talk matters over when the time comes for you to take on additional help. I can supply you with the highest recommendations and references immediately upon request.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER

Classification of the daily mail, as far as the average business house is concerned, is by no means possible in close or definite terms. It is always safe, however, to classify things into special and general. This chapter treats a little of those letters on a thousand-and-one subjects that the average business house, thru a manager or managers or others especially assigned, must answer day in and day out—the letters that it is all too likely to call routine and to answer in a routine way. There are temptations, well-nigh irresistible, to handle them mechanically—they are so numerous, time is so pressing, and the letter content is so repetitive.

Theoretically, forms will never do; practically, they very often have to do. Theoretically, the acknowledgment of every order like the reply to every inquiry offers illimitable opportunities for building business relationships; practically and unfortunately, such letters have to be “got off the desk” within a specified time and cannot always be treated as they should be. But the word *routine* is being dropped in this connection, and business is increasingly giving every order and acknowledgment, every inquiry and reply, the personal business-building attention that should be given.

Immediacy of action and genuine desire to serve are two most important elements in the so-called everyday transaction. If an inquiry is permitted to cool, sales or other business opportunity may be lost. If an order is acknowledged without conveyance of the impression that service is a privilege and an honor, then business will not increase as it should. The manifestation of the slightest irritability because the customer or the prospect has written an unintelligible order or asked a foolish question, is *ipso facto* a disqualification on the part of him who dictates answers to the daily round of letters that come in.

Inquiries should be arranged seriatim, and should be so answered. Acknowledgments should include date of receipt of order, repetition of order in particular cases, explanation as to how goods are

shipped, request for notification of delivery (also in particular cases), and always—a thank-you and a courteous sales note. Orders should be specific beyond peradventure. This means, first, exact description of goods ordered—size, quality, quantity, color, prices, catalog letters or numbers, and so forth; second, method of payment—cash on delivery, charge account, enclosed check, money order, and so forth; third, delivery—express, freight, mail, wagon, personal messenger.

The letter of acknowledgment may under certain conditions have to be a letter of adjustment. If the order omits mention of method of payment or encloses too much or too little, if the customer orders from an old catalog or indicates delivery by impracticable means, the letter of acknowledgment needs to adjust. The illustrative letters below and in the next chapter will suggest still other inadequacies in letters of order that make letters of acknowledgment both difficult and highly responsible.

The principle of directness, important in all kinds of expression, is of paramount importance in letters of the daily round—inquiry and information, order and acknowledgment, with the ramifications that these entail. They not infrequently call for a detail in planning and a courtesy in tone that letters of other kinds do not require to so exacting a degree. If every letter is a selling letter, then it should be borne in mind that these so-called everyday (*not* routine) letters, since there are more of them than of any other kind, constitute business gain or business loss just in proportion as their sales values are or are not realized by their writers.

This inquiry is a good one:

As an employee of the Company I have been appointed chairman of a committee to study form-letter plans with view to recommending the adoption of some form system for use of the company.

So many good things have been said about your system that I should like to know about it in detail. Will you please—at your leisure—explain its salient features to me and let me see a few sample forms?

I shall be very much obliged to you.

But this reply is not an answer at all. It is merely a filled-in form, and does not fit the query at that.

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In reply to your esteemed favor of May 17th beg to state we have a very complete line of letter forms and are prepared to serve your every wish. Hoping to be honored with your orders

Very truly yours

This reply, however, evinces personal attention on the part of the writer and the spirit of "nothing-can-be-too-much-trouble-in-your-behalf":

Re your inquiry about our form paragraph system:

For many years we had no such thing as a form paragraph in our correspondence practice. But as business increased, especially in our mail-order department, we found it necessary to devise certain forms for the saving of time and expense.

Our first step was to have a clerical assistant assort the carbons of our letters for a given week into such groups as acknowledgment of order, inability to fill order promptly, inability to fill order at all, and replies to certain claims—damage, shortage, exchange of goods, and the like. These carbons revealed many other situations as standard, that is, as sufficiently general to justify form treatment. The best treatment of any one was taken as model for our form paragraph. Sometimes the form paragraph was a composite of several good excerpts. Our derived form for complete, normal, unmodified acknowledgment is this:

Thank you for your order of for
..... with
..... enclosure for
.....

The goods will be sent immediately by
.....
..... and you should have them not later than

Exact duplicate of your order will be found in the parcel. Please tally against this when you unpack the goods.

The enclosed leaflet will explain to you some very attractive offerings AND PRICES. We hope that you will look it thru carefully and avail yourself of some of the many opportunities presented.

The file designation for this form is AU—*acknowledgment unmodified*. In case we are short of stock and cannot therefore send goods immediately, the second paragraph is changed to read:

The goods will be sent to you in a few days by
..... You should have them not later than
..... The brief delay is caused by a temporary stock shortage owing to the unprecedented demand for these goods. Depend upon us to do our very

best to get them to you in advance of the date indicated above if we possibly can.

The file designation for this form is AMss—*acknowledgment modified stock shortage*. The correspondent writes these initials in the lower right-hand corner of the customer's order letter and his stenographer understands that she is to substitute this paragraph for paragraph two of AU.

There is a paragraph filed under AMos—the small letters meaning out of stock and not to be renewed:

Unfortunately these goods were all sold before your letter came to us, and we cannot now tell you when they will again be available. You will recall that our advertising warned that only a very limited number of orders could be filled inasmuch as these were end stocks. We are sorry to disappoint you. We are returning your check to you—and we thank you just the same.

Our forms for the adjustment of claims are filed under C. C_d is claim made against damaged goods; C_s is claim against shortage on receipt of goods—less or fewer than ordered were received; C_z is claim against sending wrong size, and so forth. Paragraphs one and three for all adjustments are as follows:

Thank you for your promptness in informing us about the
of the we sent you on
Only by the speedy action of the customer in such cases can the merchandiser do justice to himself. You must believe us when we say that we are more eager to adjust claims such as yours than we are to fill initial orders.

.....
Please accept with our compliments the enclosed flexible leather order booklet. Note the half-dozen claim forms at the end. May you never have to use one of them! But in case something should go wrong again, this will make your end of the correction easy and our end will have to do all the work—and this is as it should be!

Suppose the C_z paragraph is to be inserted:

We are sending to you at once
of the size you require, and we are enclosing postage refund for the return of those you cannot use. We have no explanation to make as to how or why the mistake was made—and it would not be important. The really important thing is, do you get the by the date on which special delivery should bring them to you according to the promise of the post office here.

These few details regarding our form-paragraph system will make clear to you its fundamental workings. Ours is not an elaborate system, yet our plan is elastic enough to permit of tremendous ex-

pansion. We have never cared to go in for an elaborate system of form correspondence. We do not believe in it to an extended degree. But to meet a few standard situations we have found the foregoing plan invaluable.

It is important to tell you that we never use any form paragraphs for more than a year. Our present forms will be scrapped at the end of the year and fresh new ones will be devised. We are firmly convinced that such forms have earned the disrepute that they "enjoy" because business houses do not overhaul them often enough. The tendency is to use the same forms year in and year out—to be inert and indifferent and to let "well enough alone." We think this a great mistake. New wording, new format, new stationery forms even have much the same effect upon a form-paragraph and a new form-letter system as a good coat of paint has upon an old house.

This letter shows that a mere form covering numerous similar cases may have tone and quality:

Thank you for your order of

We do not appear to have an account with you and to open one for a small amount would mean a detail and expense we must try to avoid, but we do want to be of service to you. We therefore fill the order, and enclose the bill which we shall carry on memorandum only. If you will kindly remit now and return the bill with your payment, this will help us very much in keeping down the detail.

If it is your expectation to buy with some frequent regularity in the future and you desire the convenience of a monthly account, you will understand, of course, that we shall be very glad to arrange for this. If, however, this memo account arrangement suits your purpose, we shall be very glad to continue it.

We should like to hear from you often.

This acknowledgment goes out of its way to make everything satisfactory (see page 97):

Certainly. Come right along, and bring as many students as you care to bring. We always welcome school visitors, and we have made special arrangements for their accommodation.

When you arrive at the Eighteenth Street entrance of our plant, send in your card and our Mr. Willard will see you at once. He will place your party in charge of a guide who will show you everything and who will tarry with you as long as you want him to in the press room where you will see some of the largest printing presses in the world in operation. He will welcome any questions that you may have to ask, and will answer them "with interest."

If by any chance something happens to necessitate the postponement of your proposed visit, will you please let us know as far in advance of cancelation as you can? We make this request so that we may be helped in the routing of other parties and in the assignment of guides.

The enclosed card-map shows you the easiest and quickest ways by which to reach our building.

These four acknowledgment forms are courteous in tone:

Thank you for your order of December third. The goods are being packed, and delivery will be made at your country home by the time you specify.

The samples you requested are enclosed. It may be a wise procedure to indicate a second choice as a substitute for your first in case that fabric has been sold out by the time we hear from you. All mailable packages are forwarded free of charge to the customer.

Re Red Cavaliers, size 11½

Sorry, but the third item on your order of October tenth is completely out of stock and we fear it will not be renewable for a long time. Won't you please check a substitute on the enclosed prepaid card?

Your order is appreciated. The merchandise will reach you in a day or two. It has been necessary to have our store stocks replenished by transfers from our warehouse. This means a delay of possibly twenty-four hours at the most. We shall hasten delivery for you in every way.

The following note was written in reply to an inquiry about a certain locality in a state that has long been a favorite summer vacation land:

Replying to your esteemed favor take
pleasure in sending you booklet describing
..... in the state of

The booklet gave much general information about the place, but it did not answer one question that had been asked in the inquiry. The legislature of this particular state has never gone to the trouble or expense of establishing a publicity bureau. It maintains merely an information desk in the capitol. A similar inquiry about a resort was sent to the capital of another state equally famous as a summer vacation land. This is the reply that was made by the Summer Vacation Bureau of the State of:

We shall be delighted to have you spend the summer with us here in While your inquiry does not, of course, commit you to do so, we hope that our reply will make you decide in favor of

..... is a beautiful mountain village skirted but not disturbed by the new cement road between and

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER 315

..... The townspeople saw to it that the road went around rather than thru their little beauty spot. It is about three thousand feet above sea level; the air is always cool and clean; and the natural spring waters are unsurpassed anywhere in the country.

In the neighborhood of are some of the most striking scenic attractions to be found in the United States. Mount Blerner and Knife Notch and the region surrounding them are said to be the wildest and most thrilling views in American scenery. Hunting, tennis, golf, riding, driving, bathing—every summer sport—are all excellently provided for at And the participation in any kind of sport is made doubly exhilarating, isn't it, when it is enjoyed where Nature herself has made sport out of mountains and music out of brooks and waterfalls.

A list of hotels is enclosed, with exact locations, prices, special offerings for the season, and so on. There are also lists of our prominent summer residents and of the several state and national sports meets to be held here during the next six months. Under other cover a de luxe booklet comes to you. The color photography is by the famous who lives at the year round.

Enclosed is a stamped addressed envelope for your use in writing us further. We feel sure that you will want to know more about than we have been able to tell you in this short letter, especially after you have examined the booklet. Please consult us freely about all the things that we have forgotten. AND PLEASE COME TO

This letter is none the worse for its violation of the two-subject rule:

We acknowledge your letter of March 27, and regret there has been some delay in replying to it because of oversight.

Our salesman understood that you wished us to use the woman's figure for one side of each link; and therefore we estimated for only the two masks in the design submitted.

To make a pair of links with two masks on each link will cost approximately \$200. We shall have to see the design again to estimate the price exactly.

The allowance for the old cuff links will be \$12.25.

Thank you for your favorable comment on our policy of open punctuation in our correspondence, which we adopted about fifteen years ago.

We did not use typewriters for correspondence until 1910.

Our correspondence has for a great many years been centralized and passed on by trained supervisors.

The bookkeeping form cannot be too highly recommended for a letter of order:

Will you please send me the following and charge against my monthly account? Perhaps the quickest and most convenient delivery can be made by way of American Railway Express, since deliveries are made by this company twice a day in the suburbs.

Item Number	Number Ordered	Title or Description	Item Price	Total Price
2441	10 reams	Blue-White Gobbler Bond	\$.50	\$ 5.00
2763	12 reams	Mauve Water-marked Bond	.85	10.20
2772	4 boxes	Ever-Grip Fasteners	.20	.80
3001	1 gross	Shelf-sharpening Pencils	1.00	1.00
3111	5 gross	Mechanics Measures	1.25	6.25
			Total	\$23.25

The Gobbler Bond is an experiment. I am ordering it as result of the strong promotion letter you sent to me last month. If it "measures up" I shall adopt it for permanent use in place of the Kurtner, which, you will recall, I have ordered in large quantities for the past half-dozen years.

This letter of confirmation could not evince better tone and cooperation:

Confirming our telephone conversation of this morning I am writing to remind you that your wagon is to call for one four-drawer filing cabinet and one four-drawer card cabinet.

The former is to be delivered to our downtown office at 131 Mason Street, and the latter to our midtown office at 18 Grand Avenue.

To replace these pieces at the above address, you are to deliver one two-drawer cabinet on a stand and four four-drawer card cabinets.

I am sorry that a mistake was made in these deliveries. It is my fault entirely.

Note again the tabular arrangement and the consistent set-up:

Please send me the following articles listed from your special sale announcement in the morning papers.

One Dozen Arrow Collars, size 15½.....	\$ 1.80....	\$ 1.80
Three Pairs Silk Socks, size 11.....	1.50....	4.50
One Dozen Supreme White Handkerchiefs, half-inch hem, initial K	3.00....	3.00
Three Manhattan Shirts, size 15, sleeve length 35	1.25....	3.75
Three Black Ties (special sale advertised to- day—clipping attached)	1.00....	3.00

Total \$16.05

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A money order for sixteen dollars and five cents (\$16.05) is enclosed. I shall be pleased if your wagon can deliver these things before six o'clock tomorrow evening.

This order is a tie-up with a previous one on a credit arrangement. Note that catalog numbers are properly listed from low to high.

Will you please deliver the following five items as soon as you can do so. They are listed from your January catalog, which, I think, is your latest. In case you have revised listings since then, however, the list numbers will have to be verified against the item description.

Item	List Number	Description	Price
I	52	Typewriting Machine One Underwood narrow carriage number five with rubber cover Underwood Typewriter Company	\$ 70.00
II	5210R	Manila Folders One thousand manila folders legal size	\$ 16.00
III	6250H	Library Bureau (per 1000) Metal Tip Pressboard Guides One hundred metal tip pressboard guides, legal size in fifths	\$ 10.25
IV	8220	Library Bureau (per 100) Vertical File One legal size vertical file antique oak with two 8080 antique oak ends (with lock)	\$ 51.30
V	18956	Library Bureau Low Roll-top Desk One desk fitted with low roll type- writer drop in center, antique oak Library Bureau	\$145.00
Total			\$292.55

This order brings the total for the month to something over five hundred dollars (\$500.). My check will be remitted promptly on receipt of your formal bill.

Thank you for the card boxes. They arrived in ample time for the emergency, and you again proved the value of your service.

This acknowledgment is a business-builder. An indifferent concern would not have "bothered."

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

INCORPORATED
MANAGER'S OFFICE

May 28, 0000.

Mr. E. J. Smithson,
90 Winter Street,
Boston, Mass.

Dear Mr. Smithson:

Thank you for your letter of May 27 about our service.

It is indeed a pleasure to receive such expressions, and you may be sure that we of The Western Union appreciate the privilege of handling your file, and that we are not content with rendering just the usual telegraph service, but welcome opportunities to provide you with any special service we possibly can.

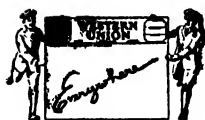
The best wishes of our organization come to you with this acknowledgment.

Very truly yours,

Grover Blanton

Manager

GB/FT



It would be difficult to imagine more courteous, more constructive response to inquiries than is illustrated by the three letters below. All three letters are sales acknowledgments, the first in reply to an order, the second and third in reply to inquiries:¹

1

We hope to accomplish two things by writing to you as friend to friend today.

First, we want to thank you warmly for your recent large order and to assure you that your business is appreciated.

And second, we want to show you, who are one of our best customers, what Sears Golden Jubilee Anniversary means to you.

Many months ago our buyers began to scour the great manufacturing centers of the nation—huge mills, giant factories—in search of merchandise worthy of our Golden Jubilee—merchandise to set new standards of quality, modern design, and remarkable value.

As you thumb through your catalog you can see the splendid results—50,000 items at prices that will save many dollars for Sears customers this year.

The Golden Jubilee is a celebration of success—success of the idea that the cost of goods can be reduced by bringing producer and consumer closer together.

We'd like to leave you with this suggestion: Consider your Sears catalog a shopping list of ALL of your needs. Mail order buying is convenient and thrifty.

2

We are gladly sending the catalog you want. As we make no charge for our catalogs, the amount you sent is being returned.

You will find this catalog a complete and reliable guide in buying the things you need. The thousands of items, accurately described and illustrated, comprise the greatest assortment of merchandise sold by any store in the world.

Another advantage is the ease and convenience with which you can do your shopping at our store by means of our catalog. Surrounded by the comforts of your own home you can select the things you want. Within twenty-four hours after your order is received the goods will be on the way, so you not only make a saving but you get good service from the World's Largest Store.

This is the reason why over twelve million customers have found this a satisfactory modern way to buy.

This year we are celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of our business by offering some of the most remarkable values in our history. Why not celebrate this occasion with us? We know that you will save money on anything you buy. Your letters and orders are always welcome, and you may be sure that we shall do our very best to please you.

3.

You need a new washer. We have it—the Water Witch.

When you wrote to us about a washing machine, we were glad of the opportunity to tell you about our Water Witch. Naturally we are surprised that we have not yet received your order.

¹ Used by permission of Sears, Roebuck, and Company.

The Water Witch gives you all the conveniences of any machine at a price you can afford to pay. We could tell you many things about its features, its safety devices, and how quickly a whole week's wash can be put out, but our catalog tells the story better than we could tell it in a letter. Look again in your copy and read the description of the washer you want. You will find that the Water Witch is up-to-date in every way, and that at our price you cannot match its construction with any other machine.

Why not try a Water Witch in your home to convince yourself of its convenience and economy? In buying from Sears you are buying wisely, for we guarantee to save you money, to deliver the machine safely, and to satisfy you. The sooner you order, the sooner you will enjoy its benefits.

Just do this—fill in the handy form enclosed and send it to us with the proper remittance; or you may want to consider our easy payment plan, included in the order blank attached. An envelope that requires no postage is enclosed for your convenience in placing the order.

Do it now, and you will have taken the first step to overcome wash-day drudgery in your home.

This letter gives specific details in reply to an inquiry. The salient points are set in for convenience of the eye and for emphasis on description and price.²

We are pleased to submit the following specifications on the Dexter Suction Pile Feeders.

These feeders are of standard truck and reloading type. This means that as the top sheet of the pile is being fed off, an auxiliary loading board is furnished so that the succeeding pile may be arranged for feeding.

Feeders are equipped with a suitable type of motor equipment for operating pump, blower, and feedboard.

One Dexter Suction Pile Feeder to be attached to #3
Miehle Press, bed size 33" x 46", smallest sheet 16" x 19",
largest sheet 31" x 45½" \$——.

One Dexter Suction Pile Feeder to be attached to #6
Babcock Optimus One-Color Press, bed size 34" x 47",
smallest sheet 16" x 19", largest sheet 32" x 47" \$——.

As to required floor space, each machine measures sixty-one inches from the extreme rear of the feedboard to the extreme rear end of the feeder. It is necessary to allow twenty inches walking space behind this if the feeder is placed near a wall.

² Used by permission of Dexter Folder Company.

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER 321

Here are three excellent letters of information by the manager of office employment and training in a large industrial plant.¹

1

We are attaching a chart which outlines the essential features of the educational program of our company. During the depression some of the specific courses mentioned have been discontinued. The outline, however, will give you a conception of our general approach to the subject.

You will note that the program aims to provide instruction for new employees who are interested in preparing themselves for work of a specific nature. It also provides more advanced courses for those who are interested in preparing themselves for greater responsibility in our organization or elsewhere.

It has been our aim to provide a ladder of educational opportunities which will parallel the functional activities of employees throughout the organization. The courses extend from English for the foreign-born to Ph.D. requirements in co-operation with the University of Pittsburgh.

Separately, we are sending you some information regarding various elements of the program. Should you be interested in having further detailed information regarding any of the general programs listed, we shall be glad to try to supply it.

2

The information about your Debating Club, which you sent on May 28, reached us this morning. We are particularly interested in the careful way in which you have planned and promoted the activity.

Since we sent you our Manual last April on the organization of Speaking Clubs, twenty-five of these groups have been organized throughout our company. The total enrollment is approximately one thousand. During the coming year we believe that the number of these groups operating in our company will be doubled.

Our men seem to be interested in furthering the movement, not only as a means of building speaking ability, but also for the purpose of discussing current problems which have grown out of changes in our economic, social, and political order during the past few years.

A copy of a supplement to our Manual, on the Criticism of Public Speech, which we have recently prepared, is enclosed. We shall be pleased to hear from you occasionally about the progress of your club.

3

Our new plan for salary and wage administration is quite simple. We first set aside \$600,000. monthly to take care of our capital charges. For every \$60,000. additional profit, averaged for a three-month period, all employees receive a 1% increase in their earnings. If our company earnings show a net profit of less than \$600,000. a month, all salaried employees contribute 1% of their salaries to the operation for each \$60,000. below the \$600,000. required for the capital charges. These contributions are made only on that portion of the salary which is above \$118.75. The hourly-paid employees contribute, under

¹ Used by permission of Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company.

these conditions, by the loss of time which is brought about by less than normal production.

In general, the plan has been received with enthusiasm throughout our company. We believe it is an answer to one of the most difficult present-day problems in that it places in industry an additional flexible element to meet changing conditions.

The plan is substantially the one which we used for getting our salaried employees back to normal after reductions in salary had been made as a result of the depression. Our experience indicates that all employees take very definite responsibility for controlling costs and working out economies in the common interest. It is my personal opinion that the plan will commend itself to industry generally, and that within a few years many companies will adopt it as a means for equitably distributing profits.

*The following excellent letter is specifically organized for the easy reading and understanding of a member of the trade. The itemized paragraphing clarifies individual sales points and facilitates reference.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit specifications on the Model A Safety Trimmer, size 21".

This machine is designed to trim pamphlets, hand-bound or case books, labels, greeting cards—any kind of trimming and cutting done in a bindery except the cutting of large flat-sheet stock.

Safety Device

The safety device on this machine is so arranged that the machine clutch cannot be engaged while either the front or the rear door is opened for making adjustments, in case the operator has neglected to stop the motor. The hands of the operator are never placed under the knife while he is running this machine.

Convenience

A unique feature of the Safety Trimmer is the automatic stop-gauge arrangement. Ten different cuts can be made with a single setting of the automatic stop gauges which are graduated and numbered. This feature of the machine insures absolute accuracy and uniformity in trimming and cutting, with no gauge readjustments necessary throughout the run. An automatic carrier is provided for work on two or more, the operation of which is synchronized with the gauge settings to receive finished work at the rear of the machine.

Construction

Eighty per cent of the parts used in the manufacture of the safety trimmer are case-hardened to insure accuracy and long life.

Trimming

Trimming falls at the back of the machine. This arrangement eliminates the necessity of the operator's handling them as he must do on

*Used by permission of Dexter Folder Company.

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER 323

a flat-sheet cutter. At no time is it necessary for the operator to reach under the knife or the clamp.

Power

The motor is one-horsepower, and is furnished with the machine. It is located inside the machine frame and has a direct gear drive.

Other Specifications

The height of the pile that may be cut or trimmed is five inches; the speed of the knife is fifty cuts a minute; the floor-space required by the machine is 4' 7" by 4' 8". The 21" machine trims work in page sizes from a minimum of 2½" by 2½" up to a maximum of 19½" in width by 21" in length.

Equipment

The equipment consists of the trimmer complete with the proper gauge, four cutting knives, six cutting sticks, the motor with proper control for starting and stopping, an oil can, and a set of tools mounted on a swinging rack.

Price

The price of this trimmer, delivered and erected, is \$——. This is subject to a thirty-day demonstration period.

This is an excerpt from a letter of general specifications preparatory to working on the job:

SPECIFICATIONS

OF LABOR AND MATERIAL TO BE FURNISHED FOR THE ALTERATION OF BUILDING
KNOWN AS 1282 ARLINGTON BOULEVARD, WASHINGTON, D. C.

JAMES GOULD
OWNER

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PLANS, AND THESE SPECIFICATIONS
FURNISHED BY

HOWARD GRAY, ARCHITECT

AND UNDER HIS SUPERINTENDENCE

GENERAL CONDITIONS

The contractor shall furnish all material, labor, transportation, scaffolding, utensils, and so forth, of every description required for the full performance of the work herein specified. He shall lay out his work and be responsible for its correctness, and shall keep a competent foreman on the premises or shall be in attendance himself; shall not sublet any part of the work without written consent of

the owner, and shall obtain all and any permits necessary to carry out his work, paying the lawful fees therefor; shall give the proper authorities all requisite notices relating to the work in his charge; shall afford the architect every facility for inspection; shall be responsible for any violation of law or damage to property caused by him or his employees; and shall properly direct his work during its progress.

All materials are to be the best of their several kinds as therein specified; and all labor is to be performed in the best manner, and to be subject to the approval of the architect. All work and material must conform to the laws, rules, regulations in force in the locality in which the building is to stand, anything herein specified to the contrary notwithstanding.

MASON WORK

The mason shall do all the mason work hereby required in connection with the alteration, plastering, concreting, furring, lathing, fire-proofing, brick and terra cotta work, and patching included, and also all 4" and other terra cotta blocks. Furring and lathing shall be of metal. Mason shall do all cutting of bricks, terra cotta, and other work apportioned to himself or his sub-contractors that may be required by other contractors to carry on their work.

HALLS

Halls are to be cemented with proper height of bed, and are to have ceramic tile furnished. Style of tile is to be selected by the owner or architect.

OUTSIDE BRICK WALLS

Foundations of concrete, of size and depth as shown in plans, are to be built. Contractor is to repair all breaks of plaster, etc., caused by himself or his workmen, whether in new or old portion of the building. When directed by the architect the contractor shall remove all rubbish left by himself or his workmen.

Atlas or Whitehall Portland Cement is to be used for all foundations.

CARPENTER WORK

The carpenter is to do all the carpentering required in this alteration. The timber to be used is to be white pine, which must be sound, dry, well seasoned, and free from all defects, such as sap and knots.

The official letter is an occasional letter. It is not a letter written every day in connection with the routine of business, nor yet the informal chatty letter that is written to a friend. It is, of course, less formal than engraved announcements and invitations, but more formal than either the business or the friendly letter. Its salutation is usually *Sir, Sirs, Dear Sirs*, or, in less formal official letters, *Dear Mr. Thompson*; its complimentary closing is *Respectfully yours, Sincerely yours, or Cordially yours*.

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER 325

The official letter is usually written as result of some special event:

Briarcliff Springs, Inc.
New Harmony
Kansas

October First
00 00

Dear Mr. Donaldson

The report of our organization for the last fiscal year is a most gratifying one.

The Board of Trustees has every reason to be proud of the management that you have brought to bear upon the enterprise, and as a member of that body I thank you most heartily for all that you have done.

At our next stated meeting I shall make it a point to move you a vote of thanks, and to recommend your permanent appointment to the position you now hold temporarily.

Cordially yours
GRAHAM MASON
Second Vice President
Briarcliff Springs, Inc.

Mr. Jay Donaldson
231 Linden Avenue
New Harmony, Kansas

GM/CF

Invitations of this kind belong primarily to the category of official letters:

The Curtis Club
Gray College
Chicago

May Twelfth
0000

Dear Senator Tellsen

Your record in Congress during the past winter has made such a tremendous impression the country over that I fear you have demands upon your time that justify your declining invitations from comparatively unimportant organizations.

Yet the Curtis Club of Gray College is made up of young men and women who are about to enter upon public careers, and there are probably few organizations, therefore, that could be more profitably addressed by you as far as the future of Chicago and of the United States is concerned.

Will you please come to us on Wednesday evening, May nineteenth, when you will be in Chicago on your way to Washington? The Mayor has promised to be present, as has also the President of the College. We want them to meet you and you to meet them. Chiefly, we want you to talk to us if you will on the significance of the special session in relation to the war feeling in the country.

The enclosed telegram, completely made out except for your name at the end, must be sent collect, of course. We are hoping that you will add your name to this message and send it straight back to us.

Respectfully yours

BLAINE WORTHINGTON
President, Curtis Club
Gray College

Senator Jay Tellsen
181 Pearl Street
Minneapolis, Minn.

BW...REF

This business letter was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley to his publisher, Charles Ollier. The date is March 14 (circa), 1817. The "revise" was of a pamphlet by Shelley called "A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote thruout the Kingdom."

I enclose you the revise which may be put to press when corrected, and the sooner the better. I enclose you also a list of persons to whom I wish copies to be sent *from the Author*, as soon as possible. I trust you will be good enough to take the trouble off my hands.

Do not advertise sparingly: and get as many booksellers as you can to take copies on their own account. Sherwood, Neely & Co.; Hone of Newgate Street; Ridgeway, and Stockdale are people likely to do so. Send 20 or 30 copies to Messrs. Hookham & Co., Bond Street, without explanation. I have arranged with them.

Send twenty copies to me addressed to Mr. Hunt, who will know what to do with them if I am out of town.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) wrote these two business letters (August 1847) to her publishers. In the first she addresses Messrs. Aylott and Jones regarding a volume of poems written by her two sisters and herself—"Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell." She had herself taken the name, Currer Bell, as nom de plume but her disguise could not long be sustained owing to the discernment of the critics and the sincerity of her work. The second letter is written to Messrs. Smith and Wilder. This publishing company had rejected her first novel, "The Professor," but she said that this rejection was "so delicate, reasonable, and courteous, as to be more cheering than some acceptances." They had indicated in the rejection that they would be favorably inclined toward a work in three volumes (long novels were the fashion in those days). Shortly afterward "Jane Eyre" was in their hands, and they accepted it with enthusiasm and published it on October sixteenth.

1

Since you agree to undertake the publication of the work respecting which I applied to you, I should wish now to know, as soon as possible, the cost of paper and printing. I will then send the necessary remittance, together with the manuscript. I should like it to be printed in one octavo volume, of the same quality of paper and size of type as Moxon's last edition of *Wordsworth*. The poems will occupy, I should think, from 200 to 250 pages. They are not the production of a clergyman, nor are they exclusively of a religious character; but I presume these circumstances will be immaterial.

It will, perhaps, be necessary that you should see the manuscript, in order to calculate accurately the expense of publication; in that case I will send it immediately. I should like, however, previously to have some idea of the probable cost; and if, from what I have said, you can make a rough calculation on the subject, I should be greatly obliged to you.

2

I now send you per rail a ms. entitled *Jane Eyre*, a novel in three volumes, by Currer Bell. I find I cannot prepay the carriage of the parcel, as money for that purpose is not received at the small station-house where it is left. If, when you acknowledge the receipt of the ms., you would have the goodness to mention the amount charged on delivery, I will immediately transmit it in postage stamps. It is better in future to address Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire, as there is a risk of letters otherwise directed not reaching me at present. To save trouble, I enclose the envelope.

The following business letter was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley from Pisa to his London bankers, Brookes and Company, on February 20, 1822. The poet's frequent letters to his bankers are valuable for the reason that they were always signed by his name in full. This was seldom the case with his other letters. Perhaps he was especially business-conscious when he wrote to Brookes and Company.

Since I last wrote you a friend⁵ of mine who had occasion to transmit £220 to Mr. Leigh Hunt has accommodated me with that sum on the arrangement that I should send him an order on you for the same amount, payable in March: the amount, that is to say, of the ensuing quarter. I have thus in part obtained what I desired, although I should still feel particularly obliged to you if you could put me in the way of rendering my June quarter available at present.

You will be so obliging as to pay Mr. Leigh Hunt on his order the amount of my quarter's income due in March.

Gentlemen, I have the honour to be

⁵ Lord Byron.

WORK

- 1 You want three novels by Walter Scott—*Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *Rob Roy*—sent you by express from the Universal Book Service, 231 Berg Street, Chicago. They cost one dollar each. Write to the shop saying exactly what you want, enclosing money for the books, directing how and where they are to be sent, and asking that they be delivered promptly. Write the letter of acknowledgment that you receive from the store. It encloses receipt, explains how books have been sent, thanks you for the order, and contains a brief sales offer.
- 2 Let it be assumed that you are going to leave your present position to accept one with another firm offered you unexpectedly thru a friend. The new position offers larger immediate salary, more of a future, and work that you know you will like better. Write to your present employer telling him about your decision, giving him your reasons for it, and requesting a recommendation. Write his reply to you and the recommendation enclosed with it.
- 3 Collison College in your home town is to offer certain courses in late afternoons and evenings next year. This is a new departure for the college. You are interested. Write to the proper officer and offices for information about fees, exact hours, length of courses, and qualifications for entrance. Reproduce his answer. Write to a friend whom you would like to have accompany you at these courses. Explain these new opportunities to him appealingly.
- 4 Let it be assumed that you are ill and that your physician has ordered you to take a rest. He has suggested in a lengthy letter to you that you ask your employer to let you have your summer vacation now and forego it during the coming summer. Tho you know that this is the busy season at the office or shop and that your services are imperative, you are prevailed upon by your friends to do as the doctor advises. Reproduce the letter that you write to your employer. Write his reply in which he is most sympathetic and gladly grants your request without loss of wages. Write his letter in which he says you must return to work or lose your job.
- 5 The Octagon Warehouse and Storage Company, 80 Lenox Avenue, Lancaster, Pa., advertises fireproof storage, expert moving service, vans to hire, safe deposit vaults, and "Give us a trial." Write to the company telling explicitly about your moving: You are moving from one place to another on such a date; you have certain pieces of furniture to go to storage and certain others to go to the new place; you want a definite estimate on the job and you are therefore exact as to the number of pieces to be handled. Write the reply that you receive from the company.
- 6 You are obliged to sail to Europe on business within a few days. Write to the White Star Line, 9 Broadway, New York City, for sailing date and accommodation at lowest first-class rate. Make arrangements also for return passage on such a date. Inasmuch as this trip has been decided upon hastily, you enclose a check as deposit on your passage and as evidence of good faith. Reproduce

THE LETTER AND THE MANAGER 329

the reply that you receive from the company. Then write your final letter completing the arrangements and enclosing a check for the balance of the passage cost both eastward and westward.

- 7 A summer camp attended by children not older than fifteen has invited you to take charge of certain recreational activities for the season—games, reading, hikes, and so forth. You are to be provided with room and board for the entire eight-week season and your railway fare to and from the camp for this service. The manager of the camp expects to receive a letter from you outlining the work you propose to do with the children and the amount of time you think should be devoted to each of the different kinds of activities that you will supervise. Write this letter. Include in it certain diagrams of sports fields, squad formations, play assignments, daily time schedules, and the like.
- 8 Let it be assumed that you are making preparations to occupy a large new room all to yourself. Some one has given you the money to have it furnished and arranged just exactly to your heart's desire. It has four large windows, two doors, an open fireplace, a closet workshop well lighted, a bathroom with shower, and so forth. Write a letter to the Home Equipment Company, 200 Lenox Avenue, New York City, explaining in detail all the furnishing and equipment you are going to need and requesting an estimate on the whole job. You must tabulate your requirements logically, give exact dimensions, and make marginal or other diagrams in your letter.
- 9 Write a point-by-point criticism of the following letter. Then rewrite the letter as you think it should be.

June 1st;0000
harrison, nY

Mr. Harold Blaine esq,
321 State street;
Chicago
Illincis

Make My dear sir—

it a Enclosed please find five (\$5.00) for which I should like to have sweater advertised in yr. catalog of which clipping jersey is herewith enclosed

instead I shall appreciate having the sweater as soon as possible as Im leaving very soon for my sumer vacation and must of a take it with me.

sweater

Yours Truely;
James Rogers

- 10 The following letters are not well organized or arranged. Rewrite them as they should be. Supply marginal diagrams for the first letter to help the person who is in charge of decorating and furnishing the room.

The room faces directly south. The two large windows and the double door between them are the only openings, the

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

rest of the room having solid walls. Owing to the all-day sun that pours into these openings we shall have to curtain them with opaque NO-FADE drapings on pull-cords. The color should be middle-green. Inside these there must be individual half-window and half-door curtains of yellow silk. These should be mounted on rods by means of wide seams so that they may be pulled back and forth easily by hand.

The room is thirty-five by twenty-four, and the floor is to be completely carpeted with the middle-green velvet you showed me. Be sure that it matches the drapes. In the same color scheme there are to be small shades for the eight wall lamps and the center ceiling lamp. The furniture is to consist of three lounge chairs, four formal chairs, two footstools, one tete-a-tete, and one day bed, all in the modern motif of the set you wrote me about. But, remember, I want the hardwood and, again, the middle-green upholstery to match.

I expect to find the room in perfect and finished condition on my return in about four weeks. Don't disappoint me.

We are glad to submit the following estimate for your consideration. It is based on the use of the most satisfactory materials and the best workmanship obtainable.

To furnish *and install* curtain for bedroom.....\$19.75

1 single curtain, using 2½ widths to curtain, to finish 6 feet 6 inches long (curtain not to have any fullness). Made of 50 inch plain red rep at 69¢ yard, no lining or trimming to be used. To be finished with 1½ inch hem on sides and 2½ inch weighted hem on bottom. Top to be finished with plain heading and hooks, installed on brass Kirsch track with complete drawing attachments, to go behind cornice.

To re-cover only for.....\$ 5.60

1 pillow (22 inches square at \$3.59) to be bought from our pillow dept. Covered in 50 inch red rep at 69¢ yard, finished with welt seams of the same material.

NOTE: Because of increasing prices, we cannot guarantee that the prices quoted in this estimate will hold more than 7 days.

We hope that you will find the estimate entirely satisfactory and that you will favor us with your order. To avoid disappointment in case our stock of the necessary material is exhausted when your order is received, we suggest that you sign the duplicate and return it to us as soon as possible. Your order will have immediate and careful attention.

Customer's Signature

Very truly yours,

Date

RADNOR BROTHERS AND COMPANY

Plan #1387—HS

Per.....

TKbn

Estimating Office

Extension 499

CHAPTER SIX

THE LETTER AND THE ADJUSTER

When letters of claim were called letters of complaint they not infrequently contained bitterness and defamation. When letters of adjustment were called "grouchgrams" they were similarly epistles of unpleasantness, to say the least. But human beings have learned—all too slowly perhaps—that good manners are as contagious as bad manners, and so letters of claim and adjustment are today for the most part written in agreeable and constructive tone, and business transactions are accordingly speeded and facilitated.

As suggested on page 310 there are so many things that may lead to dissatisfaction in the field of merchandising alone that it is impossible to indicate all of them here. Orders may be wrongly or incompletely filled as result of misunderstanding. Deliveries may be delayed or goods may be damaged or not as advertised. Misunderstandings may arise in regard to charges, bills, exchanges, discounts, subject-to-approval policy, and employee inattention and discourtesy.

Claimants, it should go without saying, should always be specific about these or other causes of their claims. They should tell specifically what is to be corrected, what they want done, how and where dissatisfaction occurred, when purchase was made, and so forth. They may advantageously perhaps enclose a copy of the order about which claim is made.

Adjusters, it is equally evident, should likewise be specific and exact. Their adjustments should in each case dovetail with definite claims made. This means, for one thing, that the writers of both claim and adjustment letters should be at pains to note reference data and to make use of them in any claim-adjustment correspondence that requires the exchange of several letters, as is so often the case. It means also that the adjuster must not only express regret and possibly explain, but that he must adjust constructively. He must retain and build good-will. He must make adjustments promptly and in a sincere spirit of service, just as

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

knowledges orders and inquiries (page 309). And he must, moreover, devise letter machinery for following up claims even after they are satisfactorily settled. Automatic reply devices are good but they are not all. The expert adjuster will see to it that spirit-of-service adjustments are carried over into sales and credit and collection departments, so that all may work together for the retention of the claimant's business. He will make his firm sensitive to any special considerations that may be desirable in future dealings with given claimants. He will, in other words, attempt to individualize both the staff and the claimant.

The three C's of adjusting have been set down as follows: *Confess* the claim is right; *confirm* the data submitted; *correct* generously without demur. There are cases, to be sure, in which the house is right and the customer is—to say the least—"laboring under a misapprehension." Willy-nilly, the adjuster must do his work and write his letters on the customer-is-always-right theory, however far removed this may seem to be from the facts in a case. Claimants may voluntarily modify or withdraw claims; rarely indeed is the adjuster so situated as to request them to do so. He may perhaps do much by way of anticipating their claims, by disarming their adverse criticism and their sharp demands. Prices may have advanced, goods may not have been procurable, stocks may have been depleted, when orders are received. In all such cases claims may be anticipated by acknowledgments that both adjust and sell, and time and trouble thus be saved for buyer and for seller.

Itemized paragraphing (see pp. 296, 297, 414) is an important device in the adjustment of complicated claims. Financial claims are frequently involved, and their adjustments more so. Every possible means should be taken with them to make letter composition clear and easily intelligible. Elaborate statistical columns and run-in matter containing many figures of different significance, should be avoided. There are many instances on record in which banks and insurance companies have written two or more letters in reply to a single financial claim letter, in order that a perfectly lucid, step-by-step, one-thing-at-a-time understanding might be accomplished. Figures set up a resistance in many people, especially figures that pertain to personal financial affairs. The average human being is somewhat afraid of finance, as well as suspicious of those who handle his own money. This places additional responsibility upon the financial adjuster.

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In all claim and adjustment letters the writers should make every possible effort to avoid aiming such terms as *annoyance, bad, careless, complaint, disagreeable, disgusted, dishonest, displeased, false, incorrect, inconvenient, inferior, offensive, poor, serious mistake, terrible, unfair, unjust, untrue, worthless, wrong, your error, your oversight* at one another. The effort will be usually found profitable in proportion to the self-control required not to make it. In no other department of letter writing is emotional restraint more important and more difficult. It would seem that Samuel Butler must have been thinking of claimants and adjusters when in *Hudibras* he wrote

Full oft have letters caused the writers
To curse the day they were inditers.

*A more courteous and constructive adjustment form than this would be difficult to devise:*¹

Immediate arrangements are being made to send the merchandise listed below to replace that about which you wrote. Thank you for calling this to our attention.

Upon receipt of the shipment, please return the merchandise you now have, making use of the enclosed paster and following the attached instructions.

Just as soon as the package reaches us, we shall reimburse you for the postage you were obliged to pay in making the return.

This is a considerate and courteous claim that may well be used as model:

And this adjustment brings courtesy and consideration to match:

The furniture that I bought of you on May twelfth was delivered in satisfactory condition with the exception of a single piece—the gate-leg table.

This has a deep scratch on the top, and the finish on one leaf is badly rubbed. Will you kindly call for it and have it made right, or deliver another one in its stead?

I shall be very much obliged to you.

We are very sorry indeed to learn that your gate-leg table was damaged in wrapping and delivery.

Our men will call for it tomorrow and will at the same time leave a duplicate which, we hope, will be satisfactory.

Even tho we allow no piece of furniture to leave our shipping department without thoro inspection, an occasional piece that is not perfect will slip thru. It is unfortunate that you had to be inconvenienced by the exceptional case, and we hope you will pardon us.

There is usually one claim department in a business house to look after all claims that come in; hence, Madam is not wrong in making two different claims in the same letter:

Friday last I bought at your store five yards of georgette crepe. This is Tuesday and the goods have not yet been delivered. The delay has caused me great inconvenience.

If this were the first time that you had been careless in delivering goods, I should feel less impatient. But three times within the last four weeks I have been similarly annoyed.

On April second I returned my bill to you for correction, goods sent back to you not having been credited to my account. On April fifteenth you submitted the bill to me again in its original form, bearing the notation *Please remit*.

I am sorry to ask for two corrections in the same letter, but I feel that I have been so unlucky recently in my dealings with you that a little return of bad luck is deserved by you just in the cause of discipline!

And her justifiable annoyance is kindly and considerably met:

You certainly have every reason to be annoyed with our delays in deliveries and our errors in monthly statements. We are entirely at fault, and we shall make it our special business to see that such annoyances do not occur further.

The georgette crepe was by mistake sent to Mrs. James Graves and taken in by her maid in her absence. She returned it to us this morning with a note saying she had ordered no such material.

The error in the bill is quite inexcusable. Please accept our apologies for the annoyance. The corrected bill will be sent you June first.

We appreciate your custom, Mrs. Graves, and thank you for calling our attention to these errors. They shall not be repeated!

A fair and frank but uncompromising way of putting an adjustment is always best:

Thank you for your check for \$55.32.

You probably intended this to cancel our July first statement.

In doing this, however, you have included an express charge of \$1.66. Before we can give you credit for this we must have the original receipt or a copy of it.

Then you have deducted \$2.92 cash discount, although the discount period has already expired.

In fairness to our dealers who remit on the specified date, we cannot allow your deduction.

While we are very careful not to give you any advantage over other dealers in terms of payment, you may feel sure that we are just as careful to give them no advantage over you.

So if you will send us a check for \$2.92 and a copy of the express receipt we can balance your account to July first.

This is a good exposition of the case to make the claimant understand the reasonableness of the stand taken:

We are returning your links, having soldered the ring which opened, and they should now withstand any ordinary pressure used on such an article.

You have evidently forgotten that you insisted upon our using the swivel connection, which we put on at your request. In a pair of links of this character there must be some hook so that you can detach one side from the other. This may be a swivel, like the present one, or a figure-eight hook, which is sometimes used in an ordinary pair of links:

OO

It would not be possible to use a straight bit connection, as the round button would not pass through an ordinary button-hole.

We gave this order a great deal of attention and we consider the work is well done and in accordance with your orders. And the price is very reasonable, and correct

A manufacturer anticipates and thus probably forestalls claim from a dealer later in the season:

According to our records we have a bulk order for your house, but we have not yet received your itemized follow-up.

In view of the large volume of business that is promised us for the new season, we must ask you to let us have details regarding this order—sizes, colors, qualities, dates for deliveries—not later than May fifteenth.

You will understand that we cannot plan our manufacturing intelligently until all definite details are supplied us. As matters now stand with us, it will take us almost three months, after orders are detailed, to make shipments ready. Because of this pressure on our manufacturing plants we shall have to make it a rule to void all bulk orders for which we do not receive complete itemized follow-ups by the date above mentioned.

Thank you very much for the general order you have sent us. We hope that you will find it possible to send us, on the very date on which you receive this letter, the details that we are asking for. This cooperation with us will guarantee the continuance of the fine relationship that we have enjoyed with you for more than a dozen years.

Many claim-and-adjustment situations call for detailed and astute study and analysis. It is by no means always easy to meet a complicated claim at every point and at the same time build constructive tone. The first thing for the adjuster to do is to discover if he possibly can the correct opening to his letter—the opening that will placate and disarm the claimant at the same time, and then lead to some definite plan of action that will be satisfactory to him (see page 187). This calls for good judgment and keen strategy in many cases. The adjustment letter must not place blame upon somebody in the establishment against

which claim is made, for this is unsportsmanlike as well as illogical. And the adjustment manager need not waste his time devising forms to meet such cases, for they are special and require personal treatment.

The employee assigned to answer the following letter was instructed to be firm but courteous in covering these points:

The policy of the firm with respect to return of goods is indicated on its invoice; namely, no goods may be returned or claims made later than five days after receipt of goods. The goods referred to in this correspondence were shipped by express on April twelfth. Mr. Stuart has apparently overlooked the condition stipulated in the invoice. Indicate willingness to make the exchange in view of the fact that he is a new customer and is apparently unaware of this return policy. •

590 Franklin Avenue
CAMDEN
New Jersey

May Tenth
00 00

Colonial Fixture Company
1835 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland
Ohio

Gentlemen

Three pewter lightoliers (catalog number 335) included in your shipment to me last month were received in a damaged condition as result of faulty packing.

I am returning these today by express and am expecting you to send me three others in exchange.

I must insist upon prompt delivery as these fixtures are needed for an installation that I am under contract to have completed by May thirteenth.

Very truly yours
JAMES R. STUART

JRS/rv

You regret very much the inconvenience caused by damage and you are shipping today (date of your letter) by express three perfect lightoliers:

Three perfect lightoliers are sent to you immediately on receipt of your letter, by way of American Railway Express special service. You will receive these, we hope, in ample time to meet your contractual demands. If you do not, please let us know, and we shall reimburse you for any loss that you may sustain.

That you should have suffered annoyance and inconvenience in your initial dealing with our company, is a cause of great embarrassment to us—the more so since we have been anticipating a continuous and increasing business relationship with you. Like the rest of the world

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we were anxious to make a good first impression! We hope we haven't failed too badly.

This sort of thing happens only two or three times a year—a by no means bad showing when you consider that our merchandise is delicate, and that packing can never be guaranteed as infallible in cases where goods have to be shipped for great distances and transferred several times from one carrier to another. This is the first time, however, that we have ever had such bad luck with a new customer. Breakage or other damage in the shipment of our goods is adequately covered by transit insurance. But it is imperative that we enter claims always within a fortnight of the occurrence of such damage. It is for this reason that all customers are requested to notify us promptly in the event that merchandise is received in damaged condition. The marked regulation on the enclosed invoice form is called to your attention. You are not to be blamed at all for not seeing this. It should be printed in bold face or in red, and it is going to be in the next issue. But may we ask you, please, to keep it in mind in connection with further orders, which, we hope, will be large and frequent!

Our new de luxe catalog is mailed to you with this letter. Please observe that it is something decidedly more than a mere catalog. PART ONE, for instance, shows you the geographical distribution of our goods, and gives you the names of leading firms in all parts of the country that look to us for supplies. PART TWO is really a separate booklet in itself, containing detachable order and receipt forms, the receipts having a column for notes on the condition of goods as received. PART THREE explains, pictorially and in writing, our numerous styles of merchandise. PART FOUR details the special terms and facilities that we are able to offer dealers everywhere.

May you find our catalog useful—and may we have better luck next time!

The president of the Federation of Women's Clubs of ——— wrote an irate letter to a premium publishing concern because she felt she had been cheated in a transaction with it. She had understood that the magazine for which she subscribed was to come to her twice a week (tho the salesman had emphasized BIWEEKLY) and that the premium was to be much larger and more impressive. The company had her signature on the salesman's receipt form. She was an important and influential person, and the company was therefore desirous of keeping her name on its mailing lists. This is the adjustment reply that was sent to her:

Certainly we shall cancel your subscription, if you really wish us to. We hope, however, that after you have read this letter you will feel differently about it. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed. Please use this to send to us a revision of your decision to discontinue. But if you are still of the same opinion after reading this letter, then please return in it the complimentary copy of the *Handy Informational Dictionary* and we shall immediately return to you your two dollars and the receipt that you kindly signed for our representative.

Here is an excerpt from the sticker that is pasted on the inside front cover of the dictionary. (The complete content of the sticker you will find used as a full-page advertisement on the outside back cover of *Live and Learn*.) Will you please read this excerpt very carefully?

Live and Learn will come to you biweekly, i.e., *every two weeks*. Our feeling is that the engaging quality of its content requires at least two weeks for thoro reading and enjoyment.

The *Handy Informational Dictionary* contains almost twice as many terms as the regulation desk dictionary, yet it is only one-tenth as large. It is not only handy; it is, indeed, the most beautiful and decorative piece of printing and binding ever issued.

You see now, do you not, Mrs. Ferguson, that our representative in no way took advantage of you. He gave you full value received, and MORE. You will realize this two years hence if you do not now. And just to show you how firmly we believe in *Live and Learn* and IN YOU, we are going to ask you to accept the remaining issues for the two-year period without any obligation whatever. To this highly desirable end we enclose a receipt covering your instalment payments for the next twenty-two months. We are especially happy to make this arrangement with you because we want you to be one of our thousands of satisfied readers, and because we shall value your opinion of the publication when, a little while later, we make a collection of testimonial copy from our subscribers for further promotional work.

By the way the April issue of *Live and Learn* is going to contain on those pages devoted regularly to domestic science a section headed *Distinguished State Recipes*, with photos of those good housewives who have devised and tried them out. Won't you please send us one of your very own favorite dishes—one that is bound to become the kind that mother-used to make? Accompany it with a small photograph of yourself, and it shall have assured place in this special-feature issue of the magazine.

How about using the enclosed stamped addressed envelope for the recipe and the photo, Mrs. Ferguson, and allowing bygones to be bygones?

Sir William Temple (see pages 25 and 34) as long ago as 1669 took the very modern steps indicated below to "get his man" in connection with a stubbornly delayed delivery of tin. The first letter was written to the offending party; the second, with copy of the first, to the offended.

I

To Mr. Cary

Hague, Decemb. 6. N.S. 1669.

Sir:

I very much wonder to hear from Mr. Andros the difficulties you make in delivering the tin according to my last order; and that you

thereby occasion so much prejudice to the king's service, which I thought you would have advanced all you could, when I write to you to desire your care in that business. But that you may understand what you call my commission to you, I will let you know that I had no power to give any orders at all about that matter, but in pursuance of the lords commissioners of the treasury's commands; and therefore new orders being arrived from them by Major Andros, they are to be obeyed in what concerns the tin business. I desire you once again to comply with him readily in the delivery of the tin, according to the last letter wrote you upon that subject; and do absolutely disown you in all difficulties you shall make upon pretence of any order from me: and if you continue to delay it any longer, shall upon the first notice of it write effectually to the Constable to do His Majesty justice in it, and me in particular, who neither expected nor deserved this dealing from you.

Your servant,
WILLIAM TEMPLE

2

To Major Andros

Hague, Decemb. 6. N.S. 1669.

Sir.

Since the writing of this I received yours of the third, complaining still of Mr. Cary's refusal to deliver the tin; whereupon I have written him the inclosed letter, which is as much as I can say in it: if he continues his impertinence still, I suppose it will be at his own cost, since your protest: and if you will send me word what are the ways of proceeding against him, I shall write either to the Constable, or to the governor of Ostend, or Sir Mark Ognate at Bruges, to favour your dispatch. I am, sir, your servant

WILLIAM TEMPLE

Charles Lever (1806-1872) wrote to his lifelong friend and sponsor, Alexander Spencer, for sympathetic as well as material support, and in the hope that Spencer might be able to do something toward adjusting the trouble. Lever was at this time—January 17, 1840—a practicing physician in Brussels. His novels are too little read today. The one referred to in the letter together with the once popular "Con Cregan" is highly worth reviving. The first chapter of the latter is a masterpiece in character humor and has been widely used in public readings.

A MOST absurd blunder has induced a certain Charles O'Malley, Esq., barrister-at-law, and leader of the Western Circuit, to suppose that my new book under that name is meant to be his Life, etc. And the consequence is that a meeting of the bar has taken place at Litton's and resolutions entered to compel a change of title.

Now as I never heard of this gentleman, nor with a very widespread acquaintance do I know of one single Mr. O'Malley, I have refused pointblank. My book is already advertised in all the London papers, and if I changed the name for another, any individual bearing the

newly-adapted one would have—what Mr. O'Malley has not—just and sufficient ground of quarrel with me.

All my friends here—military, diplomatic, and literary—agree in this view, Lord Lennox, Ranelagh, Sufield, etc., saying that it would be a very weak thing indeed to yield, and one which would undoubtedly reflect upon both my courage and my judgment.

I write these few hurried lines to put you *en courant* to what is going on.

For God's sake send me some gilt. I am terribly hard up just now

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) wrote the following adjustment letter to Leigh Hunt in reply to one from Hunt making claim for a pension from the government. Macaulay was at the time Secretary of State for War. Note the caution and restraint that characterize the letter; yet it nevertheless carries a positive note of sincerity and good grace. It has been called a "diplomatic masterpiece."

War Office, March 6, 1841.

Dear Sir

Your letter of February 16 has this moment been put into my hands. It finds me surrounded with estimates and pay lists—things much less agreeable than the comedies of Congreve or than your criticisms on them. I am afraid that my answer must be short. I will only say that the good will which I expressed towards you was perfectly sincere, and that if I used any expression which could either give you pain, or affect your interests unfavourably, I am exceedingly sorry for it. If I should be able to find a few hours in the midst of official and parliamentary business, for Vanbrugh and Farquhar, assure yourself that I will bear your wishes in mind.

I am quite sensible of your claims on the party to which I belong, and I will say, without any circumlocution, that I have a real desire to serve you. At the same time, my power is very small. My patronage is confined to clerkships, which would suit only boys; and district paymasterships, which can be held only by military men. The demands of a hundred and forty thousand constituents also press heavily upon me. The power of granting pensions resides with Lord Melbourne, who is not so much of a Mæneas as might be expected from his fine understanding, his numerous accomplishments, and his kind nature. To get anything from him for a man of letters is almost as difficult as to get a dukedom. But if a favourable opportunity should offer, I will see whether anything can be done.

In the meantime I should be really glad if you could point out any mode in which any interest which I may possess might be of use to you.

Believe me, my dear sir,
Your faithful servant,
T. B. MACAULAY.

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Charles Dickens (1812-1870) wrote this letter of claim to a John Bennett, clocksmith, about a timepiece "with something on its works." How interesting the daily routine of business would be if all business letters were written in such delightful vein!

Gad's Hill Place, Higham by Rochester, Kent,
Monday Night, Fourteenth September, 1863.

My dear Sir,

Since my hall clock was sent to your establishment to be cleaned it has gone (as indeed it always has) perfectly well, but has struck the hours with great reluctance, and after enduring internal agonies of a most distressing nature, it has now ceased striking altogether. Though a happy release for the clock, this is not convenient to the household. If you can send down any confidential person with whom the clock can confer, I think it may have something on its works that it would be glad to make a clean breast of.

Faithfully yours,
CHARLES DICKENS.

This was Mrs. Browning's charming reply—adjustment—to William Makepeace Thackeray's letter rejecting the poem "Lord Walter's Wife" that she had sent to The Cornhill Magazine, of which he was editor (see page 61):

126 via Felice,
Rome Italy.
April 21, 1861.

Dear Mr. Thackeray:

Pray consider the famous "tooth" (a wise tooth!) as extracted under chloroform, and no pain suffered by anybody.

To prove that I am not sulky, I send another contribution, which may prove too much, perhaps—and, if you think so, dispose of the supererogatory virtue by burning the manuscript, as I am sure I may rely on your having done with the last.

I confess it, dear Mr. Thackeray, never was any one turned out of a room for indecent behavior in a more gracious and conciliatory manner! Also, I confess that from your *Cornhill* standpoint (paterfamilias looking on) you are probably right ten times over. From mine, however, I may not be wrong, and I appeal to you as the deep man you are, whether it is not the higher mood, which on Sunday bears with the "plain word," so offensive on Monday, during the cheating across the counter? I am not a "fast woman." I don't like coarse subjects, or the coarse treatment of any subject. But I am deeply convinced that the corruption of our society requires not shut doors and windows, but light and air: and that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to *ignore* vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere. Has paterfamilias, with his oriental traditions and veiled female faces, very successfully dealt with a certain class of evil? What if materfamilias, with her quick sure instincts and honest innocent eyes, do more towards their expulsion by simply looking at them and calling them by their names? See

what insolence you put me up to by your kind way of naming my dignities—"Browning's wife and Penini's mother."

And I, being vain (turn some people out of a room and you don't humble them properly) retort with—"materfamilias!"

Our friend Mr. Story has just finished a really grand statue of the "African Sybil." It will place him very high.

Where are you all, Annie, Minnie?—Why don't you come to see us in Rome?

My husband bids me give you his kind regards, and I shall send Pen's love with mine to your dear girls.

Most truly yours,

We go to Florence the latter part of May.

WORK

- 1 You ordered seven articles of merchandise from the Excelsior Supply Company, 42 West Eighteenth Street, New York City. When the goods were delivered three of the articles were not as ordered—one was broken, one was short in measure, one was of the wrong brand. About a week ago you wrote to the company requesting that adjustment be promptly made but it has not yet been done. Write a second letter in which you are more explicit than you were in your first. By means of table name exactly the articles that are to be replaced and give specific description of each one, together with price. The transaction was c.o.d. But you were absent when the merchandise came, and some one at your home paid the bill without asking any questions and without opening the parcels. You now have the receipt.
- 2 Going downtown on the subway yesterday you saw a conductor behave very rudely to an old lady. He told her to "step lively" but he made no attempt to help her tho she was lame and had two large bundles to carry. He took her beyond her station tho she asked him to tell her when the train reached a certain street where she wished to get off. Your better nature was deeply stirred by these happenings, so much so indeed that you wrote a letter to the railway company when you reached home. Reproduce this letter and also the letter that you received from the company a few days later. Write the letter received by the conductor from the company. Write the conductor's letter to the company partly in defense of his attitude and partly in repudiation of your "misrepresentation."
- 3 Let it be assumed that you want to buy a small country place. It must be within fifty miles of the city. It must have a good house (preferably of brick or stone), a garden and a two-car garage, and modern equipment thruout, such as electricity, good water supply, garbage disposal, oil heating. You want a place that is near the station but you insist that it be sufficiently removed from traffic to guarantee you quiet and seclusion. You think you have seen "the very thing you want" advertised in the Sunday paper. Write a letter as directed by the advertisement. Write the reply that you receive.

- 4 Henry Obold, retailer of Reading, Pennsylvania, sends a claim to your wholesale house in Baltimore in regard to goods purchased but unsatisfactorily delivered. Some were delivered too late to enable him to keep contracts with customers, and he consequently lost sales. Some of the things he ordered never came at all. Some were of inferior quality, some were not as represented, some were damaged. He writes you a tabulated statement as to just what he ordered balanced against the foregoing claims. He also lists his losses in terms of dollars and cents. Reproduce Mr. Obold's detailed letter to you, mentioning items and quantities and prices and totals. Reproduce the courteous detailed adjustment that you send to Mr. Obold, or reproduce the detailed defensive reply that you send to him.
- 5 Copy on your paper all the letters below that stand before untrue statements regarding the letter that follows:
- a* The salutation is correct.
 - b* The letter tone is objective.
 - c* The content is not well organized.
 - d* This is an adjustment letter.
 - e* The punctuation is consistently closed.
 - f* The letter parts are properly placed.
 - g* The righthand margin should be more even.
 - h* The indented form is consistently followed.
 - i* The information given is detailed and complete.
 - k* The sentence structure is perfect.

In the person of Mr. Horace Collier write a reply to this letter, placing somewhere in the body a tabular statement regarding the goods ordered and received. Your tabulation should include catalog numbers, the number of articles ordered, prices, condition on receipt, and other details. Your letter must be written in blocked form with open punctuation thruout.

THE CRESSLAKE CHINAWARE COMPANY
24 ROBESON AVENUE
ROCHESTER
NEW YORK

June 12, 0000.

Mr. Horace Collier,
181 Bronson Road,
Binghamton,
New York.

Dear Mr. Collier:

We are extremely sorry to have caused you so much annoyance in connection with your order of June tenth. The fault is entirely ours, and we shall try our very best, you may be assured, to give you better service in the future.

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

In order that we start right now, will you please verify the following facts for us: Of the three dozen plates ordered only one dozen was received. Of the two dozen tumblers ordered four were broken. Of the three large sauce-dishes ordered one was badly chipped. The two vases were received as ordered but you desire one of them changed for a vase of another style

A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. We should not trouble you to make a check-up for us were it not for the fact that your original order is at our factory, and this procedure will save considerable time for you. We understand that you wish adjustment made as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

JAMES TREADWELL,

Assistant Manager.

Corrective Service Department

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- 6 Assume that a friend of yours has just opened a small clothing shop. You have bought an article of clothing there. Trying it on at home, however, you are not satisfied with it. Write him, not a formal claim letter asking for exchange or refund, but a friendly letter of claim, teasing him gently but assuring him that you are going to remain a faithful customer "thru thick and thin." Write his reply in the same tone—he has the article of clothing called for but he reminds you humorously that "Let the buyer beware" is to be his policy in selling to friends.
- 7 A friend of yours has written you asking you to lend him ten dollars. You are surprised—you are also poor. Write him that you must refuse to accommodate him for the very good reason that you do not have ten dollars. You are complimented, tell him, to be thought of in this way, for you do not know many people who would attribute such wealth to you. In the last paragraph of your letter, however, be serious and express your regrets. Ask him to answer you to assure you that he is not hurt or too much disappointed. Reproduce his letter.
- 8 A person younger than you, known for his reckless habits of life, writes you a letter to ask you to lend him your car for the week-end. He knows that you are planning to be away on this particular week-end and that your car will accordingly be standing in the garage. You know that he is able to drive very well indeed. You also know that, once he is on the road with a car, the only language he understands is "Step on it." He has had an accident or two since you have known him, and a fortnight ago he was in serious trouble with a traffic officer for speeding. You cannot lend him your car. Write him frankly just why you cannot. Incidentally, give him some advice about driving. Reproduce his reply to your letter.
- 9 Your newspaper has recently published an editorial in which all school and college contests or competitions—especially athletic contests—are unqualifiedly condemned. The contention of the editorial

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is that such contests beget an unwholesome rivalry resulting in selfishness and leading to dishonesty. You write a letter to the paper protesting its point of view, and setting forth some very strong arguments for the retention of contests in as many departments of school work as possible and enumerating the excellences that they develop among students.

- 10 The basketball game that your team played with another was so badly reported in *The Podunk Clarion* that you cannot refrain from writing to the editor about the errors in the report. You will have to draw upon your imagination for the exact enumeration of the mistakes made—mistakes, let us say, in personnel of players, in final score, in attendance, in comparative records of the teams, and so forth. Give in your letter also the names of the teams, the date of the game, the place of this particular game in the seasonal series of each team, and ask the editor to be good enough to publish your letter of correction on the sports page of his newspaper. Reproduce the exact envelope address you will use in the inside address of your letter.
- 11 Write a letter to the editor of a paper—"your paper"—just prior to election day, with the aim of stirring habitual non-voters out of their lethargy. Build into your letter arguments regarding "vital issues" and "dominant personalities of candidates" but do not make your letter partisan to any degree whatever. The issues at stake concern all parties, and all parties have worthy candidates running for office. If possible, justify your appeal by citing from statistics the numbers of people in various parts of the country who do not exercise the privilege of voting, out of sheer lack of interest in public affairs apparently. Picture also what great consequences there might be in your community alone if every eligible voter were to go to the polls on election day.
- 12 You were much displeased at the review of a play or a movie or a book that appeared in your paper the other day. You feel that the reviewer was prejudiced or that he failed to see the entire play or read the entire book. Write a letter of protest to the editor, pointing out specifically wherein you feel that injustice was done to his readers in allowing such a biased review to appear. If possible, base this letter on reality, that is, read a review of a book or a play that you know and with which you may disagree.
- 13 Mr Guy Gullible's house in the country is well built but it is a rambling frame structure located on a knoll where both northwest and northeast winds sweep down upon it during the winter months. He emphasized these points to exaggeration three years ago when he installed a small four-hundred-dollar oilburner. But the agent assured him profusely that the little heater would do the job. It didn't. Mr Gullible was not surprised but he was disappointed.

Last fall he looked up another agent, and thru him installed a new heater to the tune of two thousand dollars minus a one-hundred-dollar allowance on the old one. It is beautiful to behold—a big steel cube in his cellar, painted in two tones of green, with Yale-lockable doors and real grace of line.

On the very day that installation was begun, the new agent called up and requested the half-payment due under the contract. On the very day that installation was completed, the new agent called up and requested the remainder of the payment. When Mr Gullible protested gently at this punctiliousness, and insisted upon having bills formally presented either in person or by mail, he was assured that the highly special union workers in the oilburner business must be paid more promptly than other workers. He paid.

A service guaranty for one year was signed but it is ignored even after repeated telephone calls for help. The machine is noisy tho it was guaranteed to be silent. It uses almost twice as much oil and electricity as the former burner, tho the agent was loud in "selling economy." The tank gauge is attached to an inflow pipe instead of to the tank itself, and it doesn't work. Mr Gullible *thinks* that a pipe shows flow only and cannot indicate volume, and to him this appears to be a fool-place to put a gauge. The thermostat is in the front hall beside the front door. He *thinks*, again, that this is bad because the frequent opening of the door falsifies the house temperature. (He freely admits that he is not an expert, and he does not press these points.) The ducts leading to the remotest wings of his house have two or three perfect right-angles in them, and it *seems* to Mr Gullible that hot air is likely to be slowed up and dissipated by being forced thru such irregular channels. He says "It stands to reason" (this signals all his arguments). *Mr Gullible's house is cold!*

Before Mr Gullible sues (he is seriously thinking of doing so) he decides to write a strong final letter to the agent embodying his claims in courteous but unmistakably precise terms.

1 *Reproduce Mr Gullible's claim letter covering the above points (with additional ones if possible).*

2 *Reproduce the agent's or the company's seriatim adjustment letter in reply.*

- 14 Mr Guy Gullible keeps his country house open all winter so that he may enjoy its peace and relaxation at week-ends. He has caretakers on the place—man and wife—who are supposed to be there all the time to look after frozen pipes, snow removal, heat economy, and the like.

Last year Mr Gullible's fuel oil supply cost him twenty dollars a month for ten months. He signed the customary contract with its price clause (six cents a gallon unless—), its company vigilance clause, and the rest, for service again this year. Thus far his bills have been thirty dollars a month! The caretakers tell him that the new burner requires more oil than the old one. He doesn't like to hear this, and he retorts that they are keeping the house too warm, especially in his absence when they are supposed to keep all heat turned off except in their own special rooms.

Strongly suspicious that something is radically wrong about his oil supply this winter, Mr Gullible investigates on his own. He makes an occasional mid-week visit to his place; he studies the neighborhood a little; he talks with the natives. **AND—he finds that an**

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unoccupied house not far from his own is being used as a kind of club-house by caretakers and others in the community, that it has an adequate oilburner (his old one, he discovers later), and that he has been paying for its fuel right along as result of his man's signing the delivery slips. He finds, too, that thru a similar ruse he has been paying the electric bills for the club-house!

In addition, Mr Gullible learns that tank supply has not been carefully measured in anticipation of fillings, that deliveries are frequently made at night, and that, probably as a consequence, much oil has been spilled over certain expensive planting that he is greatly interested in. The company, on the other hand, has not always been vigilant about keeping his tank filled. One cold and stormy week-end he was obliged to resort to small oil stoves and electric heaters to keep himself reasonably warm. What was worse, some of his water pipes burst as result of this negligence. He has reason to believe that, on a certain night preceding a three-day storm, the oil delivery truck had only a few gallons left when it arrived at his place after a long trip, and that the caretakers had had those few remaining gallons put into the club-house tank!

- 1 *Reproduce Mr Gullible's letter to the fuel oil company complaining of the service in general and of the truck driver's collusion with the caretakers in particular.*
- 2 *Reproduce the fuel oil company's reply making out a good case for itself or assuming responsibility for certain inadequacies in service and offering generous adjustments.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LETTER AND THE CREDITOR

What a man is, that is to say, his *character*; what a man does, has done, or can do, that is to say, his *capacity*; what a man possesses, has possessed, or is likely to possess, that is to say, his *capital*—these are the three basic considerations of credit findings. There are other points, of course, but they are minor in comparison.

The person or the company asked to report on the credit standing of a third party should tell something of the length and the kind of relationship existing between them, the kind of business the subject is engaged in, his standing in the community and in his business field, his local credit rating, and whatever other special details (favorable or unfavorable) it may be possible and helpful to point out. These, added to the three C's above mentioned, will be used by the one requesting the information in deciding whether full credit privileges shall be granted, whether they shall be refused, or whether certain limited or modified credit considerations shall be extended.

There are two general divisions of credit-letter composition. One is direct, that is, the correspondence takes place between the person who asks credit consideration and the one having the power to grant it. The other is indirect, that is, the correspondence takes place between the person or the firm desiring to know the credit standing of a third party, and the business concern—financial usually—having explicit experiential knowledge of that third party's standing.

This brief outline summarizes the procedures in connection with opening and maintaining a credit account:

- I Prospect makes four kinds of request
 - A Initial request
 - B Extension request
 - C Renewal request
 - D Discontinuance request
- II References of at least three kinds are offered
 - A Individual
 - B Bank
 - C Mercantile

- III Responses vary as
 - A Favorable
 - B Unfavorable
 - C Reserved
 - D Neutral
 - E Modified
- IV The sales department may approach the prospect with
 - A Invitation
 - B Assumption
 - C Revival
- V The collection department keeps prospect's record by
 - A Files
 - B Charts
- VI Questionnaires regarding the creditor may be renewed from time to time
- VII Dun-Bradstreet ratings may be periodically consulted
- VIII Other agencies specializing in credit may also be consulted
- IX Credit personnel may call at creditor's home or office and at the homes or offices of references

Any credit questionnaire calculated to ascertain facts about an individual, a partnership, or a corporation, should be as searching as circumstances warrant without in any way being prying or discourteous. Questionnaires should be kept brief, and should be so worded as to occasion as little writing as possible on the part of the one who replies. A questionnaire may require general information only, such as is illustrated on page 300; it may require a report based upon special relationships, such as is illustrated on page 355. It is hardly necessary to add that any sort of questionnaire dealing with credit should be given respectful and dignified attention, and in most cases where it cannot be answered favorably it had probably better not be answered at all. On rare occasions credit questionnaires are returned with comment to the effect that the recipient prefers to be excused. This is, of course, self-interpretative.

The reply to a direct credit request is by no means difficult in the event that references justify the granting of credit privilege without any hesitation whatever. It is easy to say *yes* to a gilt-edge risk. The credit department in such cases usually has certain instructions to give in regard to the use of credit privilege. Houses differ somewhat as to credit machinery. Something more than "grateful acknowledgment" may properly be expressed in the

letter granting credit privilege. But appreciation should not be overdone. It should by no means give the impression that the house is aggressively encouraging purchases on the new basis. The new credit customer must not be made to feel that the sales department is opening fire upon him at the beginning of every month, and that the collection department takes up the volley at the end. He is to be accommodated rather than victimized.

If, however, credit has to be refused completely or qualified in some degree and manner, as result of reference findings—if, that is, the credit prospect is a bad risk or only a moderately good one—then the reply to credit request calls for the greatest possible tact and strategy. It is, indeed, a kind of adjustment the object of which must be to prevail upon the customer or the prospect to deal on a cash or a modified cash arrangement. This means that the advantages of cash dealings must be explained—the special privileges extended cash customers, the cash discounts offered, the end-of-month freedom from bills, and the like. In some cases—fortunately rare—it may be best frankly to say that, inasmuch as references given have not replied or have replied unfavorably, the company would very much prefer that the prospect start relationship on a cash basis that may later justify the credit extension desired.

In all credit letters, deductive presentation is somewhat better than inductive (see page 400). The recipient of a credit information letter wants to know promptly whether the answer is *yes* or *no*. He may keep decisions waiting until he hears from a bank or other credit house, and he wants to know what the answer is immediately he opens the credit information letter, without wading thru detail that may properly be considered later. The first paragraph, perhaps the first sentence, should therefore break the news, be it happy or unhappy. This does not mean that details and analysis are to be omitted. They should certainly follow, first, as justification for the decision, and second, for ready reference. This rule of composition is regarded as important by all financial houses that are obliged to contribute credit information as part of their daily round.

There are many different styles of credit forms and questionnaires, individual houses for internal reasons setting up their own to meet special requirements. Here are a few of the more general ones:

THE LETTER AND THE CREDITOR 351

This form is for the use of the personal credit interviewer:

REPORT
ON
APPLICATION FOR ACCOUNT
Date.....19

Name
Address
.....
Business Address
.....

REFERS TO

REPORT

This is a department shop form to be filled out by the collection department for the credit department:

Date....
Name
Address
House or order only
C.O.D.—Failed
 Too slow
 By request
 Dispute
Close Account—Owes, and slow
 Returns goods
 Small, and pays on
 account
 Death
 Revises when buys
Have understanding before charging
Stop and revise
Reopen account by request
Keep to terms
.....

This is a form request for credit information, used by a large department store:

.....
.....
.....
*In making application for a charge account, we have been referred to you by of
We shall appreciate and consider confidential any information that you may furnish us concerning the financial responsibility of the applicant*

Very truly yours,

PLEASE ANSWER HERE

Gentlemen:

This is a department shop form to be filled out by the book-keepers, notifying that the account limit has been reached:

LIMIT NOTICE

Date..
Name
Address
Amount of Limit.....
Amount of Account

PURCHASES BY MONTH
MAKING UP PRESENT
INDEBTEDNESS

Jan.	July
Feb.	Aug.
March	Sept.
April	Oct.
May	Nov.
June	Dec.

LAST PAYMENT

Date..... Am't.....

This is a department shop form used to notify bookkeepers that an account has been opened:

.....19

Name

Residence

Business Address

Limit \$.....

This form is devised for special use in covering a temporary situation:

This form carries the subject's name or number at the top of the body of the letter:

We refer to your.....
 establishing credit
 in favor of
 covering a shipment of.....

A communication from the beneficiaries has now come to us. They will avail themselves of this particular credit. Your further instructions will be carried thru.

We should like to have your expert opinion regarding the above subject.

Your estimate of his financial responsibility, his ability, his reputation, and his methods of borrowing heretofore, will be especially helpful to us. Anything additional that you may be able to give us will likewise be appreciated.

It is customary for financial concerns, giving credit information regarding a person or a company, to protect themselves with some such printed form as the following. It is usually printed on the stationery of the credit department, either at the top or at the middle or at the bottom of the page:

It is understood that the information contained in this letter is given in absolute confidence, and entirely without prejudice or the assumption of responsibility by us

or

All persons are informed that any statement on the part of this bank, or any of its officers, as to the responsibility or standing of any person, firm, or corporation, or as to the value of any securities, is a mere matter of opinion, and given as such, and solely as a matter of courtesy, and for which no responsibility, in any way, is to attach to this bank or any of its officers

*Following are two of the many financial statement forms used by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to obtain credit information from borrowers:*¹

¹ Used by permission of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

THE LETTER AND THE CREDITOR 353

Form CR. 107

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Statement Form Suggested by
Federal Reserve Bank of New York
PERSONAL

NAME _____

OCCUPATION _____ ADDRESS _____

To: _____ BANK OF _____

I make the following statement of all my assets and liabilities at the close of business as of the _____ day of _____, 19____, and give other material information for the purpose of obtaining advances on notes and bills bearing my signature, endorsement, or guarantee, and for obtaining credit generally upon present and future applications.

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS USING "NO" OR "NONE" WHERE NECESSARY.

ASSETS				LIABILITIES and NET WORTH			
Cash <small>(See Sched. No. 1) On hand, and unrestricted in hands</small>				Notes Payable to Banks, Unsecured <small>Direct borrowings only. (See Sched. No. 1)</small>			
Accounts and Loans Receivable <small>(See Sched. No. 2)</small>				Notes Payable to Banks, Secured <small>Direct borrowings only. (See Sched. No. 1)</small>			
Notes Receivable, Not Discounted <small>(See Sched. No. 2)</small>				Notes Receivable, Discounted <small>With banks, finance companies, etc. (See Sched. No. 1)</small>			
Notes Receivable, Discounted <small>With banks, finance companies, etc. (See Sched. No. 2)</small>				Notes Payable to Others, Unsecured			
Life Insurance, Cash Surrender Value <small>(Do not deduct loans) (See Sched. No. 3)</small>				Notes Payable to Others, Secured			
Securities — (Stocks, Bonds, etc.) <small>(See Sched. No. 4)</small>				Loans Against Life Insurance <small>(See Sched. No. 3)</small>			
Mortgages Owned <small>(See Sched. No. 4)</small>				Accounts Payable			
Real Estate <small>(See Sched. No. 7)</small>				Interest Payable			
Automobiles <small>Registered in Own Name</small>				Taxes and Assessments Payable <small>(See Sched. No. 7)</small>			
Other Assets <small>(Itemize)</small>				Brokers Margin Accounts <small>Debit Balances (See Sched. No. 5)</small>			
				Mortgages Payable on Real Estate <small>(See Sched. No. 7)</small>			
				Other Liabilities <small>(Itemize)</small>			
				Net Worth			
Total Assets				Total Liabilities and Net Worth			

SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULES

No. 1. Banking Relations. <small>(A list of all my bank accounts, including savings)</small>				No. 5. Brokers Margin Accounts. <small>(A list of all my margin accounts)</small>	
Name and Location of Bank	Cash Balance	Amt. of Loan	If - w Endorsed, Guaranteed or Secured	Name and Address of Broker	Amount of Debt Balance

No. 2. Accounts, Loans and Notes Receivable. <small>(A list of the largest amounts owing to me)</small>				
Name and Address of Debtor	Amount Owed	Age of Debt	Description of Nature of Debt	Description of Security Held

No. 3. Life Insurance.							
Name of Person Insured	Name of Beneficiary	Name of Insurance Co.	Type of Policy	Face Amount of Policy	Total Cash Surrender Value	Total Loans Against Policy	Amount of Yearly Premium

No. 4. Securities Owned. <small>(Stocks, Bonds, etc., but not Mortgages)</small>						
Face Value (Bonds) No. of Shares (Stocks)	Description of Security	Registered in Name of	Cost	Present Market Value	Income Received Last Year	To Whom Pledged

(SEE OTHER SIDE)

You will find, we hope, as many others have found, that, in the free use of the telegraph to save valuable time in business and even in social correspondence, you will compel attention and force action that will produce results for you worth many times the modest cost.

Credit revival or stimulation forms such as this are not to be recommended, however expensively devised they may be:

We cordially invite you to use
your charge account with
and Company

Although the account has been
inactive it remains open and
available for your convenience

We shall welcome an opportunity
to be of service to you

Credit revival is preferably attempted in such courteous and personal appeal as the following:

It has been a long time since we have had the pleasure of serving you. Your credit account has been inactive so long, indeed, that we fear something has happened to displease you? Won't you make use of the enclosed stamped addressed envelope to let us know whether our service has been unsatisfactory to you?

This is an especially good time of year to take advantage of our stock-clearing operations. In all of our fifty years of merchandising we can truthfully say that never before have we been able to dispose of such superior values at such ridiculously low prices.

Our thought—our *hope*—is that you will feel disposed to resume relationship with us on the old-time credit arrangement. We feel sure that you will do so once you have looked over the enclosed folder. Credit customers of long standing—both active and inactive—have the privilege of four advance special days to avail themselves of these offerings before the general public may take advantage of them.

The following model letters in credit information should be studied for the sake of tone, guardedness of content, and special nature of credit correspondence.

This report is indefinite and reserved, but more will probably follow:

We understand that the company to which you refer in your letter of May 27 is a limited one.

It was organized in 1928, in succession to an old established firm.

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It has a declared capital of \$25,000., and we are informed that it is regarded as safe for a fair credit. Its principal capacity of operation appears to be as agent for manufacturers.

We regret that our report must be so brief, but we shall communicate with you further in case we are able to secure additional information.

Meager as the information is, the letter is nevertheless helpful, and it is well written:

The subject of your inquiry of September twelfth, Mr. Isaac J. Mordek, has maintained an account with this bank, as well as with its branch in Shanghai, China.

We understand that he is a young agent of some means, and that he is active and reliable.

Inasmuch as he has never requested any credit favors, we have never had occasion to investigate his affairs exhaustively.

He represents the Shanghai Platinum Company and the Hankow Trading Corporation, and his visit to this country at present is occasioned by the interests of these two concerns.

We hope this information will be of some value to you.

Some valuable information is presented about a "third party," and in terms that are confidential and dignified:

M.B.O. and Co. is not a customer of ours, but from such investigations as we have been able to make we have found the business to be well-established and well-officered.

Tho the company has occasionally required extra time for making payments, it is generally regarded as safe and satisfactory, and has never been refused credit for its requirements.

We are not in possession of any financial details, but the responsibility of the company is apparently unquestioned, and the risk is viewed as desirable by those whom we have consulted.

This information is, of course, extended in strict confidence. We hope it serves your purposes.

*Further charges must be declined until the account is settled: **

Your patronage here is appreciated and it is our sincere desire that nothing shall happen to disturb the cordial relations surrounding your dealings with us

So we have authorized the delivery of the purchases you made yesterday although your account is now long past due and frequent requests for payment have brought no response

It is not our desire to embarrass you but you will agree, we are sure, that we should not be expected to honor any further charges without a payment on your account

Won't you please send us a check now—the amount is \$76.45—so we shall be in a position to authorize future charges without delay?

Thank You!

* From *The Blue Book of Credit and Collection Letters* by Daniel J. Hannefin. Used by permission of Mr. Hannefin.

This unique appeal for the revival of a charge account is placed on one side of the letter sheet for the reason given in the last paragraph.⁶

"Every question has two sides," runs an old proverb

And this letter is arranged to get your side of a question that's worrying us

Here's the question

Is it through any fault of ours that your charge account has not been used for six months?

And here's our side

You've been too good a customer for us to let you slip away unnoticed

We value your patronage—we want to keep you as a charge customer

And if it's through any fault of ours that you're not using your account here, we'd appreciate your telling us "your side"

We assure you, we'll do our utmost to make correction

The other half of this sheet is yours. Will you use it for your "side"—and mail it to us in the enclosed stamped envelope

Thank you

This is a considerate interim letter from the credit department of a bank to a credit inquiry:

A little more time than we expected has been required to prepare a detailed letter-report on the subject of your inquiry of May twenty-fifth.

He has been involved in so many ventures, and he has still so many affiliations in business in various parts of the country, both official and financial, that much correspondence is necessary to get all the necessary data together.

⁶ From *The Blue Book of Credit and Collection Letters* by Daniel J. Hannefin. Used by permission of Mr. Hannefin.

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We shall do our best, however, to have a thoroughgoing statement in your hands on or before the time limit indicated in your letter.

Refusal of credit privilege is based upon sound and sufficient argument, and the cash arrangement is made attractive:

It has become necessary for us to limit new credit accounts to a certain number each year. The quota for this year has long since been filled and the credit books are accordingly closed. We are obliged to say this to many credit prospects every year, and it is never an easy thing to do. But we almost invariably find that these good people deal with us on a cash basis, and that this relationship with them proves to be so satisfactory that nothing whatever is lost and much is gained by both of us. We feel sure that such will be the case between you and us, and we are thus reconciled to saying *no* to your kind credit request. You will be reconciled, too, we prophesy, once you have availed yourself of our merchandising opportunities.

Newcomers to this community are always welcome to the CHIC SHOP. And this means real hospitality with no strings attached. You, as a new resident in Heartville, are at liberty to come in and use our general guest rooms at any time—our writing room, our library, our auditorium (where interesting programs are usually in progress), our parlors, and the rest. In the exercise of this privilege you are to feel no obligation whatever to buy. But our hope is, of course, that the sight of our offerings, the touch of them, even the smell of them will very often tempt you to buy—and that you will as often yield to temptation!

And while our merchandise is always a temptation to our shop guests, our price policy is even a greater one. It is because our top-notch, qualities are procurable for so little money that ninety per cent of our business is conducted strictly on a cash basis. This it is, in turn, that enables us to give our regular customers such extraordinary values. The majority of them have come to prefer the cash relationship with us.

For many years now we have made it a point to invite new residents in Heartville to our private pre-showings, along with our long-standing credit customers. They are permitted to buy at these events on a cash basis. We enclose, for instance, two special permission tickets for your personal use—the white one will admit you to the spring-hats opening next Tuesday; the pink one, to the showing of our new lingerie importations on the following Tuesday. You will find both of these events (and others that will follow during the year) unusually interesting socially as well as economically. Music, dancing, and refreshments are always incidental to these affairs. We shall look forward to seeing you in attendance.

The second part of the following problem is solved. This is the more difficult part of the two solutions called for. The first you should work out for yourself.

Mr. George P. Rodney, 249 Main Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, has sent in an initial order to the Imperial Pen Company, 315 South Street, Rochester, New York, requesting that the goods be sent on credit. He

gives the name of Gregory and Wilder, 608 State Street, Ithaca, New York, as reference. Mr. James Fuller, credit manager of the Imperial Pen Company, sends an inquiry to Gregory and Wilder concerning Mr. Rodney, with assurances, of course, that any information given will be treated confidentially. An unfavorable reply is received from Gregory and Wilder, based upon the following memoranda:

- Unreasonable demands for delivery of goods
- Unwarranted deductions on several remittances
- One check returned marked *insufficient funds*
- Account overdue

1 Write Mr. Fuller's letter to Gregory and Wilder under date of January twelfth.

2 Write Gregory and Wilder's reply under date of January fourteenth.

A frank and fair solution:

Credit Prospect 10445 is now an unsatisfactory account. He has dealt with us for many years, and up to 0000 was in all respects a good and sometimes highly profitable credit customer. Since then, however, he has been increasingly difficult and troublesome, and we have within the past year been reluctantly obliged to tell him that we can no longer continue the credit privilege to him.

Chief among our difficulties in dealing with him of late has been his insistence upon deliveries within dates that could not reasonably be met. When these were not made on the impossible dates he specified with his orders, he voluntarily and entirely without justification made deductions on his tardy remittances. On June fifteenth, 0000, his check for \$53.27 was returned to us marked *insufficient funds*. This amount represented about one-third of his actual indebtedness to us. Up to the present we have been trying to get this bill settled but without success, tho we have offered unusual (for us) concessions in order to close with him.

This is by no means the sort of report that we like to make in reply to credit-information requests, and we are extremely sorry that it has to be so adverse in this particular case because the subject was for so many years one of our most highly respected and appreciated accounts. Our feeling is that he has been caught—we hope not irrecoverably—in the depressing financial and industrial events of the past three or four years.

Let it be assumed that the following letter has been referred to the credit manager of the Coe Varnish Company, who instructs you to send an answer covering the following: acknowledgment of the letter, necessity for obtaining credit information, request for references as to business and financial ability and personal integrity, assurances that references will be promptly investigated, suggestion that if Mr. Russell wants the goods by January 18 he should make an advance remittance. Reproduce this letter of reply. (Mr. Russell's letter was written on plain stationery.)

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324 State Street
Chicago Illinois
January 2 0000

Coe Varnish Company
817 Broadway
New York City

Gentlemen

I have recently purchased the hardware business of Mr. James Sanford of this city, and I should very much like to open an account with your house.

For the past five years I have been manager of a large wholesale hardware concern. I am in excellent financial standing, and I can promise to meet any and all business obligations promptly and satisfactorily.

If you decide to accept my orders, will you please let me know what terms you can offer me? And if you can fill the enclosed order and get the goods to me by the eighteenth of this month, I shall very much appreciate your doing so.

Very truly yours
ARTHUR B. RUSSELL

Enclosure
ABR/mc

The foregoing problem is here handled tactfully and constructively:

Thank you for thinking of us in connection with an account. We have already placed your name on our books and have added the experience and the standing that you mention.

In accordance with the excellent business practice of which you are, of course, aware, we must, however, ask you for three specific references: one who will inform us as to your financial standing in your community, one who will tell us about your business capacity; one who will give us a little information about yourself personally. We enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your use, and we promise to consult each one of these references promptly and confidentially in your behalf.

With the exception of the keg of Kellogg's *White Lead* the merchandise you ordered is being made ready for shipment. We are ourselves having difficulty in keeping a sufficient amount of this brand on hand to meet demand. But we are expecting a new supply in a day or two. Will you, please, in the meantime send your check for \$71.83 which will cover the present order minus the customary discount to you and minus also the cost of the paint? We are sorry to trouble you about this, but since you want the goods by January eighteenth and since it is necessary that we hear from your references before your account with us is technically opened, this arrangement will probably be more satisfactory for both of us—and, incidentally, more strictly systematic for our respective auditing departments.

The tally booklet that we enclose will be useful to you, we hope, not only in placing future orders but also in helping you to keep a weekly check-up on your placements with us and with other firms in different kinds of merchandising. Naturally, we should like nothing better than to have you exhaust its pages in a few weeks and request a new one! We likewise enclose our credit form with general information about our business policies.

May you enjoy in your new venture all the success that your predecessor had, and, if possible, even more!

Three enclosures

This letter by the inimitable R.L.S. credits to Miss Annie H. Ide, by will drawn in the "proper legal manner," one birthday. It was addressed to H. C. Ide, father of the "legatee," from Vailima, Samoa, on June 19, 1891.⁷

Herewith please find the DOCUMENT which I trust will prove sufficient in law. It seems to me very attractive in its eclecticism, Scots, English, and Roman law phrases are all indifferently introduced, and a quotation from the works of Haynes Bailey can hardly fail to attract the indulgence of the Bench.

Yours very truly,
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I, Robert Louis Stevenson, Advocate of the Scots Bar, author of *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Moral Emblems*, stuck civil engineer, sole owner and patentee of the Palace and Plantation known as Vailima in the island of Upolu, Samoa, a British subject, being in sound mind, and pretty well, I thank you, in body:

In consideration that Miss Annie H. Ide, daughter of H. C. Ide, in the town of St. Johnsbury, in the county of Caledonia, in the state of Vermont, United States of America, was born, out of all reason, upon Christmas Day, and is therefore out of all justice denied the consolation and profit of a proper birthday:

And considering that I, the said Robert Louis Stevenson, have attained an age when O, we never mention it, and that I have now no further use for a birthday of any description;

And in consideration that I have met H. C. Ide, the father of the said Annie H. Ide, and found him about as white a land commissioner as I require:

Have transferred, and do hereby transfer, to the said Annie H. Ide, all and whole my rights and privileges in the thirteenth day of November, formerly my birthday, now, hereby, and henceforth, the birthday of the said Annie H. Ide, to have, hold, exercise, and enjoy the same in the customary manner, by the sporting of fine raiment, eating of rich meats, and receipt of gifts, compliments, and copies of verse, according to the manner of our ancestors;

And I direct the said Annie H. Ide to add to the said name of Annie H. Ide the name Louisa—at least in private; and I charge her

⁷ Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, New York City.

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to use my said birthday with moderation and humanity, *et tamquam bona filia familia*, the said birthday not being so young as it once was, and having carried me in a very satisfactory manner since I can remember;

And in case the said Annie H. Ide shall neglect or contravene either of the above conditions, I hereby revoke the donation and transfer my rights in the said birthday to the President of the United States of America for the time being:

In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand and seal this nineteenth day of June in the year of grace eighteen hundred and ninety-one.

SEAL

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Witness, LLOYD OSBOURNE,
Witness, HAROLD WAITS.

In literary history the two greatest writers on the subject of credit have been Benjamin Franklin and Daniel Defoe. The first excerpt below is taken from Poor Richard's Almanac; the second, from The Complete English Tradesman.

How POOR RICHARD Established His Credit

IN order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I drest plainly, I was seen at no places of idle diversion: I never went out fishing or shooting; a book indeed sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal, and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores thro the streets on a wheelbarrow. Thus being esteem'd an industrious, thriving young man, and paying duly for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books, and I went on swimmingly.

CREDIT is a consequence, not a cause; the effect of a substance, not a substance, 't is the sunshine, not the sun; the quickening something, call it what you will, that gives life to trade, gives being to the branches, and moisture to the root. 't is the oil of the wheel, the marrow in the bones, the blood in the veins—of all the trade, cash, and commerce in the world. . . .

'T is apparent, even by its nature, 't is no way dependent upon persons, parliaments, or any particular men or set of men, as such, in the world, but upon their conduct and just behavior. Credit was never chained to men's names, but to their actions; not to families, clans, or collections of men; no, not to nations. 't is the honor, the justice, the fair dealing, and the equal conduct of men, bodies of men, nations, and people, that raise the thing called *credit* among them.

WORK

- 1 **TAKE THE CASH AND LET THE CREDIT GO.** Let it be assumed that this is the newly adopted slogan of a large department shop that has recently decided upon the policy of "no more credit privileges—sales for cash only." Write a strong letter to be sent to all former credit customers, explaining the reasons for this change in policy and aiming to retain their custom on the new cash basis. Prepare a leaflet to be inserted in this letter attractively reinforcing the arguments of your letter and setting forth special sales inducements. Indicate illustrations in your layout.
- 2 Certain customers of the shop in which you are employed have for many years dealt regularly with you on a cash basis. You have been asked to compose a letter to be sent to them offering credit privileges at your shop, and explaining to them in detail what the advantages of the credit relationship are. Emphasize the ease and simplicity of buying on the credit plan at your establishment. Enclose blanks to be filled out, and suggest a certain date on which the customers will find it especially advantageous to open the credit account, owing to particular offerings that are to be made to credit customers only on this date. In preparing to write this letter, draw up a brief outline of the content, headed by a resolution, as for argument. Submit the resolution and plan with your letter, that is, run these as a marginal outline of your letter copy (see page 414).
- 3 About three years ago Peter Hudson opened a radio shop in your community. He had practically no capital, but his character and his capacity were A 1 in every respect. You assisted him with credit, and he has been very successful. His credit limit has gradually been advanced to more than three thousand dollars. He now asks for fifteen hundred dollars' worth of goods. In doing this he presents a financial statement and a request that you increase his credit limit to six thousand dollars. Write him a letter in which you indicate your unwillingness to go quite so far. But assure him that you are willing to do something for him. Give your very good reasons for this modification. Show by his reply to you that you have made him see the reasonableness of your modification.
- 4 When Miss Ima Detter was graduated from Triple Bluffs High School she left an unpaid bill of \$27. at the school cooperative shop. At the end of her freshman year at Ga-Ga College she left an unpaid bill of \$33. at the college cooperative shop. At the end of her sophomore year at Cuckoo College she left an unpaid bill of \$54. at the college cooperative shop. She has now entered Madweg University as a junior and has applied to the manager of the student cooperative shop there. Mr. Will B. Cautious, for credit privilege. She gives as references the three cooperative shop managers with whom she had previously had dealings—Mr. R. U. Dunning, Mr. E. Z. Mark, and Mr. I. B. Simple, respectively. Mr. Cautious consults these references and then writes a polite, constructive refusal to extend credit privilege to Miss Detter. Reproduce his letter. You should know that Miss Detter comes from a family of means, that she is a charming and personable young

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woman, that her scholastic standing is invariably very high, and that she is always active and popular in all important student organizations and enterprises. You may make still other logical assumptions in regard to the situation.

- 5 Mr. James Sheridan, who has charge of the Los Angeles branch of your bank, has written you to inquire about a Mr. Thomas Green, who has recently moved to Los Angeles from New York City. Mr. Green has asked Mr. Sheridan to look after the transfer of his business from the New York City bank to the Los Angeles branch. On looking up Mr. Green's record you find that he has connections of four different kinds with your bank in New York City. He has both a drawing account and a savings account. He has some excellent stock securities in your keeping. He is at present co-executor with your bank in the settlement of a small estate. By notes to and conferences with the various branch heads of your bank you have found out still other valuable things about Mr. Green's relationship with you, and in all cases this relationship is and has been most agreeable and beneficial to your house, and probably to him. Write a detailed report-letter to Mr. Sheridan in which you embody seriatim all the information you have to give regarding Mr. Green. Perhaps copies of inter-department notes should be enclosed, along with duplicates of Mr. Green's last monthly statement, lists of his holdings in your care, your personal estimate of him as a business man, and so forth. Somewhere in your letter you should carry the customary note of warning regarding the confidential nature of your communication.

Solve all parts of the following problem:

FINANCIAL RATINGS, INC.
324 WINTERBURN AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY

June 9, 0000

Mr. Thomas Warfield
182 Barclay Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Warfield

We are extremely sorry to have taken so long in getting your inquiry answered. In addition to moving our offices from the twelfth floor to the twentieth, one of the members of this organization died last week and we were not open for business for three days

We regret that we are not able to give an account of the subject of your inquiry that is altogether favorable. He has for some time undertaken more contracts than he has been able to carry thru. He has, moreover, permitted business overhead to consume profits to such degree that he has been deep in the red for the past year. His working forces are, however, in all respects A1, and it may be that, with a general pick-up in business, he will be good for the amounts you mention. Just at

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

present you will do well, we think, to postpone the transaction that you are contemplating

We hope that this information and advice will be of service to you

Very truly yours

ADAM GRAYSON, Secretary
Financial Ratings, Inc.

AG/rh

Copy on your paper all the letters below that stand before true statements regarding the above communication.

- a* The salutation is incorrect.
- b* The letter tone is objective.
- c* The content is well organized.
- d* This is an adjustment letter.
- e* The punctuation is consistently closed.
- f* The letter parts are not properly placed.
- g* The margining and spacing are correct.
- h* The indented form is consistently followed.
- i* The information given is detailed and complete.
- k* The second sentence in the body is not ambiguous and incoherent.

Rewrite the letter in compliance with the principles of credit letter writing explained in the foregoing pages. Reproduce the letter to which it is an answer.

7 Solve the following problem:

- TO** The Worthington Iron Company
1324 Market Street
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania
- FROM** Credit Research Bureau
181 State Street
Chicago
Illinois
- ABOUT** Steel Builders, Inc.
17 Michigan Avenue
Milwaukee
Wisconsin
- DATA** The Worthington Iron Company is considering buying a large block of the commercial paper of Steel Builders, Inc., and writes to the Credit Research Bureau. The Credit Research Bureau covers the following points in its reply to the Worthington Company:
- a* Personnel now and previously
 - b* Company standing over a period of years
 - c* Output, turnover, and competitive status
 - d* Reputation with banks in home and branch cities

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- e* Extent, stability, fluctuation, and various issues of its investment paper
- f* Present cash balances and other quick assets
- g* Reserves for meeting slumps and depressions
- b* Any distinctive policies and records

8 Read the letter below; then

- 1 Write the reply from the bank to Mr. Saks. Perhaps the telegram carried *Joseph Isaacs* or perhaps Mr. Saks is wrongly listed in the credit files as *Joseph Isaacs*, or both.
- 2 Reproduce the letter written by Mr. Saks to the telegraph company.
- 3 Reproduce the reply from the telegraph company.

PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
1924 North Bellevue Avenue
CLEVELAND
OHIO

April tenth
00 00

The Trans-Nation Bank
149 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland
Ohio

Gentlemen

Att Credit Department

A fortnight ago I was about to sign a profitable contract with Mr Joshua K Billings of the Bach-Billings Company, 31 Market Street, Chicago

Before closing the contract, however, Mr Billings quite properly desired to consult the bank reference that I had used in my negotiations with his company. That bank reference was you. Inasmuch as I have had satisfactory financial relations with you for a dozen years now, I felt sure of you

A few days ago the Billings deal came to a disappointing halt. Upon inquiry I found that a telegram had been sent to you by Mr Joshua K Billings asking about my standing, and that your reply telegram informed him that I am unknown to your bank!

Naturally I am at a loss to understand why you replied to him as you did, and I shall be obliged to you for an explanation. I need not remind you, however, that it is now too late for me to recover that contract.

Very truly yours

JOSEPH I SAKS

President, Progressive
Construction Company

JIS.:RV

Fifth Letter

INSIST

Recall past satisfactory transactions and insist that they be repeated

Suggest limited possibilities of future transactions

Require logical reasons for receiving goods gratis

Give warning that patience is exhausted

Interrogate as follows

—"Have we been fair?"

—"Do you insist upon trouble?"

—"Have we not served you well in the past?"

—"Can you afford to return the compliment?"

Sixth Letter

SUMMARIZE

Review your entire action

Cite number of letters sent, with dates

Give contents of letters, in brief

Give contents of replies, in brief, or say what debtor's attitude has been

Contrast the two groups of letters, or the two attitudes

Call attention to the fact that every possible consideration has been extended

Say finally that only one course remains open to you unless account is settled by certain date

Seventh Letter

DEMAND

Inform that the time has expired

Inform that the matter has been turned over to your attorney

Inform that all further communications must be addressed to him and that he is in possession of all the correspondence to date

Give the name and address of your attorney. (In case the matter is turned over to a collection agency, the letter may be revised accordingly)

The following collection serialization does not exactly tally with either of the foregoing exhibits. But the letters represent the average deviation from prescription that is necessary in meeting given cases. They are "taken from life." and they settled the

VARYING DEGREES OF PRESSURE IN COLLECTIONS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Poor Risk	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills
Fair Risk	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills
Gilt-Edge Risk	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills	Formal Notices or Bills

Numbered Columns Represent Months
 Formal Notices or Bills
 Personal Letter Appeals
 Threat Letters
 Other Steps Taken to Collect

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account. The important thing is that they were written according to a plan or a system, completely thought out to meet a case before the letters were composed. Every house must have some system—it matters not which or what kind so long as it is logically followed thru and is adapted to specific situations.

1

Enclosed is a memorandum of your overdue account. An early settlement of this balance is requested

Re \$75. still owing.

2

The amount of seventy-five dollars (\$75.) remains open on our books against your name.

No adjustment is necessary, we think, in regard to this bill. Will you remit, therefore?

3

On February tenth we wrote you calling your attention to a bill of seventy-five dollars (\$75.) that you owe us. We have not heard from you, to our surprise, and we must ask you now to send us your check at once, or, at least, to explain when we may expect settlement of this account.

Customers who pay their bills promptly make it possible for us to sell our goods as reasonably as we do. We should like you to help this worthy merchandising cause along. You yourself have benefited by our low prices, and we hope that you may continue to do so.

Won't you, please, in justice to us, pay us what you owe us in order that we may meet our obligations? Please use the enclosed stamped addressed envelope for mailing your check to us—now.

4

Why have our letters of February tenth and March first brought no reply from you? You do not want us to feel that you are trying to evade payment, do you? You can at least "pay" us an explanation, can't you?

By meeting your bills promptly you keep your credit clear and reputable. To default in a small amount, such as your indebtedness to us is, means just as much against your credit standing as to default in a large amount. And if all our customers were to fail us in the small amounts they owe us, as you have thus far done, we should have to go out of business.

Just sign the enclosed check *now*, won't you please? It is filled out for the correct amount. And here is a stamped addressed envelope—another one—for your use.

5

We shall be extremely sorry to resort to forcible measures to collect the seventy-five dollars you owe us.

Mild measures, however, appear to leave you cold. We feel that we have been very patient and courteous. Won't you agree?

But—unless your remittance is in our hands by March twentieth, we shall be obliged to take legal action for the collection of your account. Sorry!

6

Harrison Brothers have placed in our hands the enclosed statement of the amount they claim you are under contract to pay. They say that they have met their part of the agreement, but that in spite of repeated urging, you have failed thus far to meet your part.

As intermediaries of many years' experience in adjusting differences among business men, we have found that frequently there is a misunderstanding of the terms of agreement; and in taking this case up for our clients, we hope that you will trust us to act in your behalf also (without charge to you) and thus assist in bringing about a settlement on a basis of friendship and good-will.

We believe it is their intention to treat you with the utmost fairness, for they are long and favorably known in the business world; and we infer that it is your intention to treat them honorably, for it seems hardly likely that, for so small an amount, any one would wish to forfeit his self-respect and the respect of those with whom he deals.

Please write us fully and frankly. If there is any reason why the account should not or cannot now be paid, tell us why and your reason will have the utmost consideration.

If, however, this account is correct and has not been paid simply because of oversight, we urge that you at once send to the publishers, or to us, the amount of the enclosed bill.

7

Can it be possible that we were mistaken in supposing, as we did in our recent letter, that you would respond to an appeal to your sense of fairness? Must we believe that you are so indifferent to the requirements of customary business usage as to ignore the good offices of a third party, tendered (without charge to you) in the interest of mutual good-will?

We have given you the opportunity to make to our clients, Harrison Brothers, any explanation you desire with regard to your indebtedness, but you appear to have treated our offer with contempt. Perhaps you did not receive our previous letter? Very well—we take the precaution to call your attention again to your obligation.

Our business is to collect or to adjust accounts. We believe, on the statement of our clients (which you have not denied) that you owe the money claimed and that you are able to pay your debts. However, before starting further proceedings we wish you to know that we are ready to consider all the facts with a view to a friendly settlement. But we must reach an adjustment quickly.

Unless we hear from you within ten days, we shall be compelled to place this claim in the hands of the attorney representing us in your locality, with instructions to proceed to the collection of the amount due by every legitimate means at his command.

These two letters are businesslike and fair without in any way evincing impatience or disgruntlement:

1

You will recall that when your account was opened, it was with the understanding that our bills would be paid not later than the fifteenth of the month of issue. Your account for March, amounting to eighty dollars (\$80), is now past due. If the delay in payment is caused by any inaccuracy in the bill we shall be glad to correct it.

The charge account is a cooperative arrangement which we hope you have found a convenience. We are sure that the delay in forwarding your check this month is an oversight that you will correct within the next few days.

2

Your account has now been permitted to run far beyond the time established by the company for payment of its bills. No attention has been given to our requests for a remittance. As a result, although much to our regret, this is to notify you that unless your account amounting to \$80 is paid within three days from date, or some reason for non-payment given, it will be necessary, under the rule of the company, to deny further credit.

We hope we shall not have to do this, because we believe that you have found the account a convenience. It may be that the delay is due to some condition of which we should know.

The following four collection letters represent units from collection sequences. The single unit may make the collection and the sequence thus be stopped, or the entire system may have to be used.

1

A short and pointed note very often brings results:

Please send us the ten dollars that you owe us.

We have written to you about this before, but in the rush and tumble of affairs you have probably overlooked our letters—and the bill.

Please—this time—put the check into the enclosed envelope this very minute and get the thing off your mind—and ours.

2

This attempt at collection places the responsibility fairly and squarely:

Is there anything wrong with the five dollars we have charged against your account?

If there is, please just write us frankly and say so.

We're always glad to correct any errors. We're not perfect. We don't pretend to be.

Our records tell us that you owe us five dollars. They may be wrong. They may not be. The point of the matter is that you have neither paid us nor answered our letters which we have tried to keep fair in argument and pleasant in tone. We think we have succeeded in this. What do you say?

Please use the enclosed addressed stamped envelope and write YES or NO on the card it contains.

4

A claim-and-adjustment collection is often trying on the patience of both parties. There is a note of restraint in this letter:

You would not have made a claim, we know, for discount on your recent remittance unless you honestly felt that there was some good reason for doing so.

In our letter of June ninth we tried to explain what our records show concerning your account with us. Now, won't you please go over your record of your dealings with us, Mr. Roberts, and write us whether we are really in error to the extent to which your note indicates?

If you still think that we are in error, then please write us what you wish us to do. We are open to any sort of compromise that seems to you to be reasonable and fair. We want to settle the account satisfactorily to you, so that we may still retain your custom and therefore your good-will. Nothing else matters so very much, does it?

It would be very difficult to devise a kindlier handling of a collection situation than the following personalized appeal for a deposit:

Our bookkeeper has called our attention to the fact that your account has been overdrawn. We are sorry about this and we feel perfectly certain that there is some mistake somewhere.

It is always our desire, as you must know by this time, to give depositors the very best service possible. But you will realize of course that we must, out of fairness to our other depositors, call your attention to this overdraft.

Won't you please deposit seventy-five dollars (\$75.) to your account immediately? This will cover everything, and reestablish our fine old relationship more firmly than ever.

Please give us the privilege of greeting you personally when next you call at the bank.

This letter was written to an old customer who had not kept his promises. It became necessary to tell him that the collection would have to be placed outside if he again failed to remit. The first paragraph is not given inasmuch as it simply reviewed the case. These two paragraphs are the really important ones.¹

.....
Frankly, Mr. _____, we are reluctant to send your account to our lawyer for collection. You have done business with us for a long

¹ From "When They Fail to Pay" by George B. Talbot in *The Mailbag*. Used by permission.

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time and we believe in your good intentions. After all, lawyers do have a way of getting the money but in the end it costs you more and often leads to many unpleasant consequences. So we are going to give you every chance to avoid outside collection of your account.

It will be necessary for you to do your part though. Your check for \$125.00 by the end of the week and satisfactory assurances on the balance of the account are what we consider your part now. It's your next move!

These letters have done good work by way of collecting, and at the same time retaining good will. On the letterhead of the second one there was a humorous picture of a fat man bending forward. An actual safety pin was inserted at that point where shirt and trousers meet.²

1

No need of our writing a long letter about how much we should like you to bring your account up to date—so we shall skip down to here



2

This is a safety pin extraordinary—it serves two purposes.

In the case of the fat man above, it relieves him of a lot of worry and bother.

It will also relieve you of a lot of bother and worry. It will set you square with us and help us to square up with the other fellow—so be careful not to lose the pin.

Better be sure of it and play "safety first," for it is the pin you will want to use to attach your check to this letter in payment of our statement of January 1, amounting to \$69.20

Thank you for the check. No charge for the smile we hope you will get out of this letter.

P.S. Please hurry. We want to use the pin to ask another fellow to use the "Safety" first.

After they have greeted your appeals with silence that is anything but golden, the author of the following letter recommends that the collection-letter writer tell some responsible executive in the owing firm all about the case. He did this and the money was collected amicably.³

Your company opened an account with us last spring. From May 28 to June 12 we shipped goods valued at \$655.86. These bills are therefore now considerably overdue, but the peculiar part is that no

² Used by permission of The Dartnell Corporation.

³ From "When They Fail to Pay" by George B. Talbot in *The Mailbag*. Used by permission.

attention is given the account, either in the form of money or by way of a reply to our various letters.

It is not our intention to embarrass you by forcing settlement, but aren't we entitled to the courtesy of a reply and a part payment? This account probably hasn't come to your personal attention before. This may be the reason why we have not heard from you?

We shall expect a check for \$339.92 by October 11 or some satisfactory explanation.

The poem—"If I Knew You and You Knew Me"—printed attractively on the margin of the original copy of this letter, helped to take the credit manager to the customer in an agreeable impersonal way.⁴

You've probably heard that according to some authorities treasurers are supposed to have vinegar in their veins instead of good red blood.

When it comes to asking for payment of a just account, they are said to assume that every one is a "dead-beat."

Here's one that refuses to be "dubbed" that way.

According to our records you owe us \$——, statement for which has been sent to you. Yet, we believe the reason you haven't paid is just because you haven't got around to it.

And, we are going to stick to the point for the next ten days at least.

By the way, when you're sending in the check, better tell us, if you haven't done so, how many copies of *1000 Ways to Make a Thousand Dollars* to reserve for you—they're going fast.

Thanks.

Below are two collection series. The first consists of three letters on open accounts; the second, of four letters on contract accounts. These letters have been successfully used by a large commercial establishment in the Middle West. They are here reproduced by permission.

1

Your attention is respectfully called to the balance on your account now due in accordance with our regular terms.

In the event your remittance has not been mailed, won't you please forward it promptly. We shall be very much obliged to you.

The amount is \$

2

You apparently have not replied to our recent letter regarding the past-due balance owing on your account.

Our records show no reason why payment should be withheld beyond our usual term period of thirty days, and we are therefore somewhat in doubt as to the reason for the delay.

Please mail your check today or tell us your reason for not doing so.

⁴ Used by permission of The Dartnell Corporation.

3

Although we have sent you two letters regarding your account, it is still unpaid.

The terms under which you purchase from us are clearly stated on our invoices, and as the account is now considerably past due, we must insist on payment.

You undoubtedly realize that there is a reasonable period beyond which we should not be expected to carry an unpaid account. Won't you therefore acknowledge this principle of good business by mailing remittance at once?

We shall expect your check for \$

1

This is just a friendly reminder that the monthly payment on your contract has matured.

Your payments are due each month as specified on the notice which we send as a convenience to you.

In case you have not already mailed remittance, won't you kindly do so promptly?

3

Since writing you a short time ago regarding payment due on your contract, another installment has matured.

We know you do not want our account to pyramid in this way any more than we do, so that bringing it up to date becomes an increasingly difficult task.

Our business methods are predicated upon your installments' being taken care of promptly each month as they fall due, and we cannot permit them to accrue.

We must insist on the immediate mailing of remittance to bring your account up to date. The enclosed envelope is for your convenience.

2

Your contract account shows owing a past-due installment as indicated on the enclosed notice.

All the attractive features of our time-payment plan are predicated upon payment of the installments when due, and we expect you to meet these payments promptly.

Please cooperate with us by forwarding your remittance today, in case it has not already been sent.

4

We regret that our efforts to induce you to remit in accordance with the terms of your contract agreement with us have apparently been unavailing, as we are still without your remittance.

You now owe two installments, as shown on the attached notice, and unless they are taken care of without further delay, we obviously will have no alternative except to enforce the provision in the contract pertaining to a default in payment.

We want you to continue to enjoy the advantages of our equipment, and trust you will make that possible by mailing your check immediately.

The series of ten letters below is used on open accounts by a large concern in the West. The series is preceded, of course, by a monthly statement—perhaps more than one—and followed by per-

sonal letters until the account is settled or given over to legal collection authority. These forms are sent at approximately fifteen-day intervals. Note that after the third, a house form (with red letterhead in the original) is sent to the salesman. It carries at the bottom of the sheet a fill-in for him to return to the credit manager. Later in the series there is another such cooperative form. Note that the last two of the series carry a tone of finality.

1

It may be that our recent statement, on which there are now slightly past-due purchases, has been overlooked.

If there is any question regarding the account, will you please advise us? Otherwise, may we have your remittance by early mail?

2

A few days ago we reminded you that your account with us had been overlooked.

The statement which we are enclosing shows that as yet your check covering the past-due amount has not been received.

If there is any reason for withholding payment, will you not advise us so that an immediate adjustment may be made?

If there is no reason, we shall appreciate your remittance now

3

About ten days ago we forwarded you a statement of your account.

We shall appreciate your remittance for the past-due items amounting to \$

4

(To Salesman)

Amount \$

The account of the above-named customer is now past due in the amount shown above.

Besides sending out statements we have also written the customer twice without receiving payment or any word as to why payment is being withheld.

We shall appreciate your cooperation in securing a remittance to cover the amount shown above so that it will be unnecessary for us to write this customer again for payment.

Please see this customer as soon as possible and let us know the result of your call, in the space provided below.

.....
I saw this customer on _____ and report:

Signed by _____

Salesman
Date

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5

We are disappointed to find that your past-due account, as shown on the attached statement, is still unpaid.

You certainly must agree with us that ample time has been given you to make settlement. Are we not justified now in asking for an immediate remittance?

We shall look for your remittance by early mail.

Recently we wrote you regarding your past-due account of \$

Up to the present, however, we have not received either your check or any word as to why payment is being withheld.

As our terms of sale have been exceeded considerably, we feel that you will be glad to have your attention called to this account.

Will you not send us your check in the enclosed envelope or advise us when payment will be made?

7

(To Salesman)

Balance Due \$

Fifteen days ago you were notified of the past-due account of the above-named customer.

To date we have received neither his remittance nor any word as to why he is withholding payment.

You will realize, we know, that long-past-due accounts have a decided bearing both on the manner of handling collections and on the acceptance of future orders.

It is therefore essential that this account be paid within the next fifteen days. If it is not we shall be forced, in accordance with company policy, to charge back all commissions on the balance shown above.

Please call on this customer and secure his check or in the space below advise us fully and at once of all details.

.....
I saw the above customer on

and report:

Signed by

Salesman
Date

8

The complete file of correspondence in connection with your account, as shown on the attached statement, has been referred to me with a request that permission be given to turn your account over to our attorney.

When I approved your order I did so because I felt that you would meet your obligation promptly, and, although I am naturally disappointed to learn that your account is not paid, I still think I was right in my judgment. I am sure there must be some unusual circumstance surrounding this account as I cannot conceive of any one's wilfully neglecting to answer letter after letter, especially in view of our liberal attitude.

Further action will mean considerable additional expense and embarrassment for you. I want, therefore, to make this personal appeal to you to send us a check for your account, or make some arrangement whereby payment will be completed within a reasonable time.

I am enclosing a stamped return envelope, and shall appreciate it if you will write me frankly and fully relative to this account.

9

You must have some good reason for not replying to our letters or sending us a check to cover your small past-due account.

If we only knew your reason for withholding payment, we feel sure that some satisfactory arrangement could be made to liquidate your account.

Won't you take a few moments and answer the questions on the bottom of this letter and return it to us?

The amount is \$

Is this balance correct?

Do you know that this account is — days past due?

Can you send check in ten days?

10

Possibly you have not been in a position to give our recent letter the proper attention. It concerned a small balance of \$

In order to close this small outstanding charge, may we expect your check within fifteen days, or an acknowledgment stating when payment can be made?

Below is a deferred-payment collection series. This, like the above series, is preceded with statements and followed with personal letters until such time as more drastic action is considered imperative. The last statement preceding the following forms has enclosed with it an envelope UNDER the flap of which is printed in heavy face the amount due and the date when due. This series too, it will be observed, carries the intermittent cooperative forms for the salesman, and winds up with a telegram to him. The schedule of follow-up on deferred-payment accounts is approximately as follows:

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D.P. 1	7 days before due date
D.P. 2	5 days after due date
D.P. 3	14 days after due date—copy to sales office
D.P. 4	24 days after due date
D.P. 5	37 days after due date—copy to sales office
D.P. 6	47 days after due date
Personal correspondence	57 days after due date

Balance of account \$	1	Amount due \$
-----------------------	---	---------------

Our recent notice to you showed an installment due on your Deferred-Payment Account.

Your remittance has not been received, and apparently this escaped your attention.

If this has not been sent in, will you see that it is attended to at once?

Balance of account \$	2	Amount due \$
-----------------------	---	---------------

Your payment for the installment now due has not been received. This should have been mailed to reach us on the due date which was some ten days ago.

May we not have your remittance today for the amount past due, to enable us to place your account on a current basis?

3
(To Salesman)

The above customer has allowed his deferred payment account to become delinquent. Experience has proved that when one installment is allowed to lapse, there is a decided probability of having to resort to legal action or repossession.

Your commission can be protected only by keeping this account up to date. Please see this customer at once, and report in five days in the space provided below.

I saw the above customer on _____ and demanded payment.

Remarks:	Signed by	Salesman
		Date

Balance due \$	4	Amount due \$
----------------	---	---------------

Your payment for the installment now due has not been received. This should have been mailed to reach us on the due date which was fifteen days ago.

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

We must have your remittance immediately for the amount past due, or it will be necessary to take definite action to collect your account.

5

You have overlooked the fact that in signing your contract you agreed to send us a remittance regularly each month until your account is paid in full. We remind you of this fact, for these regular payments have not been received.

Your signed contract, which we hold, also says that in the event of unpaid installments, the entire balance is due and payable at once.

Send your remittance now for the past-due installments which are listed below and we shall be glad to have you continue your regular monthly payments.

Past-due installments:

Date	Amount
------	--------

6

(To Salesman)

We have notified the above customer several times that his installment account is delinquent. We have received neither his check nor any word as to why payment is being withheld.

Today we were forced to write this customer that unless payment is received by return mail, we shall have to resort to legal action.

We are, of course, desirous of avoiding any unpleasantness with this customer which would result from legal action, and we know, too, that you are interested in protecting your COMMISSION.

It is highly important that you see this customer at once and request immediate payment. If you cannot secure payment for the amount now due, we recommend repossession of the equipment.

7

(To Salesman)

Date:

Sales Office:

Customer's Name:

Salesman's Name:

Address:

Copy To:

Order No.:

Balance:

Installments Past Due:

The past-due condition of the above customer's installment account warrants your immediate attention.

It will be necessary to collect the delinquent amount to reach us within ten days. If you cannot secure this amount pick up the equipment at once.

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Your failure to collect the above amount or to send us notice of repossession will result in charge-back of commissions.

PROTECT YOUR COMMISSIONS BY PROMPT ACTION.

PLEASE REPORT ON THE REVERSE SIDE.

Here is a problem that calls for combination sales-collection solution. It must have promotional or house-organ quality together with collection appeal.

You are chairman of the employees' welfare committee of your firm. Each employee pledged himself for five dollars one month ago for the annual outing. The outing has come and gone, and still many members have not paid the promised fee. Some have paid only one dollar "on account." A few, who paid "cash down" at the time the pledge was given, were unable to attend the outing, but they have loyally refused to accept any refund, preferring to let their contributions go toward employee relief insurance. The majority of the employees, however, paid the outing fee and attended the outing, at which a "pleasant time was had by all." Write *one strong* letter calculated to reach and impress all four classes of employees above defined, namely:

- 1 Those employees who have as yet paid nothing, but who nevertheless enjoyed the outing
- 2 Those employees who still owe your treasurer four dollars, but who nevertheless enjoyed the outing
- 3 Those employees who could not attend the outing, but who nevertheless paid you in advance and refused reimbursement
- 4 Those employees—the largest group of all—who paid in full and who enthusiastically attended the outing

Your letter should be so written as to collect from groups one and two. It should express grateful acknowledgment to groups three and four. It should make in general for greater *esprit de corps* among all classes of employees. And it should begin now to "sell" next year's outing to every employee in the firm.

And the "solution solves":

THE GREATEST EVER YET! That's what they said about our last annual outing. And they were right—with one possible exception, of which more anon

What made it the greatest ever yet—until next year? Why, our fine old company spirit—and nothing else but! LENSICO is and has been for years the envy of other industrials the country over because of superior product, because of superior service, and primarily because of the single-thoughted, close-knitted body of happy working people unanimously bent upon BIGGER AND BETTER LENSICO as the days, months, and years go trippingly by.

The vast majority of employees this year paid for the outing in advance and participated with gusto. A few—thirty-three to be exact—paid in advance, but owing to some last-moment occurrence

were prevented from attendance. Your committee sent refund checks to these thirty-three disappointed people. And what do you think happened? Every check came back with a note to this effect: ADD THIS TO THE RELIEF INSURANCE FUND. ANYHOW I HAD MORE THAN FIVE DOLLARS' WORTH OF ANTICIPATION FUN OUT OF IT! To a man, they did this! Seemed like a conspiracy in altruism. Your committee was "too full for utterance." Good old LENSICO *esprit de corps* was never more eloquently manifested!

But now—that minor note: A few employees—twenty-one to be exact again—enjoyed the outing but have not yet paid the promised fee. A few others—just fourteen (you expect your committee to keep figures straight and names dark, don't you?)—paid the original deposit of one dollar but have not yet paid the other four dollars. They too enjoyed the party—we saw 'em doing it! Both of these groups are requested to regard this letter as a collection appeal. The recreation committee of LENSICO freely admits that it doesn't know how to write collection letters—it has never had any experience in this field. This is, indeed, the very first time it has ever had to ask for overdue outing funds, and it finds the task awkward and embarrassing. It would refuse to go in for expert collection serialization if it knew how, for it knows that these comparatively few—thirty-five out of 781—will pay up now—right now! A bill envelope is enclosed for the convenience of these signed and solvent thirty-fivers.

Next year it's to be a two-day and three-night cruise! We embark Friday p.m. and disembark Monday a.m. And where, and when, and how? It's all in the bag—yet! But you may feel justified in saving your pennies now and looking forward, for it's going to strike a new high in industrial recreational undertakings. And the fee will be no more than it was this year, namely and to wit, five dollars. Think of that!

*Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915) almost invariably wrote masterpieces, and when he turned his hand to business letters he was a super-master, as this short collection message proves: **

THE ROYCROFTERS
DEVOTED TO PRINTING AND ARTS AND CRAFTS
EAST AURORA, NEW YORK

May First

Dear Friend:

This is a pretty blunt question. But its answer is one of vital importance to us—

Are you going to settle for Volume One of the Complete Works, or are you not? Ten Dollars, you know.

Hope still crimsons all the Fast, and we await your reply by return mail.

Yours very sincerely,
ELBERT HUBBARD

P.S. Volume two is ready.
Shall we send it along?

*Used by permission of Mr. Elbert Hubbard II.

The telegram is increasingly used in business, and in practically all departments of business. While it can never take the place of the letter, especially in difficult situations, it may be used effectively to pave the way or to follow up, and in general to hasten transactions as well as to emphasize eagerness to serve satisfactorily. Credit information is frequently sought and conveyed by wire, orders are placed and acknowledged and revised, shipments are dated and expedited and traced, replies are requested, inquiries are answered, claims are adjusted, style and price changes are announced; and all sorts of sales operations—making appointments with buyers, meeting unexpected competition, reviving and encouraging accounts, supplementing advertising, encouraging and stimulating salesmen and their campaigns, announcing special sales, accepting offers, replenishing stocks, quoting prices, and so forth—are conducted by one or more of the different services afforded by the telegraph companies. The Western Union Telegraph Company in its valuable business services makes such suggestions as the following for collection telegrams: *

- 1 Your prompt remittance will assist us greatly. Please forward today.
- 2 Remittance for our invoice of (date) will be appreciated.
- 3 Your account overdue. Shall appreciate remittance.
- 4 You have probably overlooked outstanding account. Kindly favor with remittance.
- 5 Have been very patient. Won't you kindly remit? Urgent.
- 6 Closing books for audit. Please oblige with remittance.
- 7 Today last day to take advantage of cash discount.
- 8 When may we depend on remittance asked for? Second reminder.
- 9 Please mail check immediately for past due account. Thank you
- 10 Very important remittance reach us by (date). Ask your cooperation.
- 11 Will draw on you (day) unless we receive remittance immediately
- 12 Must take sharp action if remittance not received at once
- 13 Necessary pay part account. Further delay impossible. Telegraph amount today.
- 14 Attention past due account imperative. Dislike to take further action.
- 15 Last chance make good. Write remittance today.

* Used by permission of The Western Union Telegraph Company.

WORK

- 1 We shall assume that you, as collection manager in a large department shop, have adopted the following serial collection method: one itemized bill; one "overdue"; two personal notices; three personal letters. Write the second personal letter of this series in a given (imagined) case involving \$300, due in the purchase of several different kinds of merchandise. All letter parts must be supplied in your solution.
- 2 Let it be assumed that you are in charge of collections in a large correspondence school. Indicate graphically the collection policy that you would inaugurate to cover four different classes of students—poor risks, fair risks, good risks, gilt-edge risks—and point out the number and the character of the letters that you would send to each class. Reproduce the body of a typical mid-series letter that you would send to the fair risks or a typical mid-series letter that you would send to the gilt-edge risks.
- 3 Your firm has sent two statements and two letters to a credit customer in an effort to collect two hundred dollars now ten months overdue. This customer has been tardy previously in meeting his bills, but he has always paid eventually, and you are certain that he will meet his obligation this time. You are to write a third letter to him, and this letter is to be the final appeal. Explain the situation exactly as it is. Inform the delinquent that you must have a settlement of the account. But aim, of course, to retain his custom and good-will. Before writing this letter prepare a brief outline of the body and run it marginally along your letter (see page 414).
- 4 Mr. M. T. Zeroman is managing-secretary of the sports association of Cipher College, Lower Moronia, Missouri. No small part of his business work consists of negotiating with other colleges, with high schools, with private schools, and with general adult athletic clubs for their use of the Cipher College Sports Arena—the finest athletic field in the state if not in the United States. The field is being paid for by the fees received for its use, and it is so greatly in demand that the original construction debt has been almost paid off. (Cipher College athletes frequently complain, indeed, that others have more use of their sports arena than they themselves have.) During the past year, however, Mr. Zeroman has had difficulty making collections from the organizations that have hired the field. He has, of course, a complete file of events, of charges made (a sliding scale from minor to major sports), of attendance at all events, of the financial ability of the schools and clubs that have used it, and so forth. A comparatively small entrance or initial fee is payable when the contract with an outsider is signed and the date is fixed. But the percentage on gross receipts is at present outstanding in numerous cases. After submitting the customary bills and "coaxers," without returns, Mr. Zeroman prepares strong collection letters to be sent to the delinquent organizations. You are asked to reproduce one or more of these letters, using your imagination to supply exact name and location of addressee as well as special financial data that must be tabulated in the body of the letter.

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5 WRITE A LETTER

FROM	TO	FOR
Collection Service, Inc. 132 Market Street Philadelphia Pennsylvania	Mr. Harrison Baldwin 165 Calvert Street Baltimore Maryland	John Poulson's Sons 181 State Street Trenton New Jersey

Mr. Harrison Baldwin has a beautiful home in a suburb of Baltimore. About a year ago he decided to have the plumbing in his mansion re-done completely. Instead of turning the work over to a contractor he dealt directly with John Poulson's Sons, manufacturers and fitters of fixtures. This firm did a unique job for him by way of harmonized colorings, novel devices, and the like. Mr. Baldwin was pleased—he said so in writing—and the company was proud. But he did not pay, in spite of several letters from John Poulson's Sons. Collection Service, Inc., now has the account. You are to reproduce the first letter of this agency. It has been instructed to make any reasonable compromise. One of the obstructive factors in the Poulson-Baldwin relationship has been the troublesome publicity caused Mr. Baldwin thru company advertising that featured certain interiors of the Baldwin home. The Poulson firm secured permission from Mr. Baldwin to reproduce colored photographs of these in national mediums. But Mr. Baldwin now contends that this publicity caused him a great deal of annoyance and trouble, and that, had he seen its disadvantages to himself, he would never have given permission to the plumbing company to use the photographs as it did. Copy runs have been discontinued as far as possible by the Poulson company, but a few pieces are still appearing because of contract terms. This situation must be treated in the first letter of Collection Service, Inc., along with other considerations.

6 Write the letter required in the following situation:

DEBTOR	Parkins, Blanton, and Company 148 Southern Boulevard San Francisco California
CREDITOR	Harrison Shapland and Company Garrison-on-Hudson New York
CONDITIONS	The former has owed the latter \$137.78 for one year. The latter has sent the customary bills and three or four strong letters. It has likewise investigated Parkins, Blanton, and Company, and has not been able to discover any sufficient reason why that concern should not have paid the bill long ago. Harrison Shapland and Company now write a strong next-to-last collection appeal.
SUGGESTIONS	This letter contains a brief review of the case. It bases its central argument upon the endless-chain character of owe-and-pay in the conduct of sound business. It is kindly and cooperative in

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

tone, but contains "between the lines" an explicit positiveness that cannot possibly be escaped by even a casual reader. An automatic device or cash suggestion is enclosed to make payment easy and immediate.

7 Solve the following problem:

THE ELITE HABERDASHERY
29 CORTLANDT STREET
NEW YORK CITY

March 18, 0000

The Jay Jones Company
12 Eastman Boulevard
Rochester, New York

Gentlemen

Attention Mr Jay Jones

It is just possible that the bank may have confused my name with Garrison or Harrison or with some other having the same sound and rhythm. At any rate it has made a mistake, and I am sorry. The money was always on hand, and yesterday I deposited my regular weekly check. The enclosed check for \$1200. will, therefore, be paid without comment or query.

May I say that I think your systematic methods of collecting are extremely interesting. They reflect true Chesterfieldian courtesy and consideration as applied to business dealing. Your collection letters, indeed, almost tempt one to postpone payment until he has experienced the pleasure and the benefit of the complete serialization. Thank you for keeping after me so charmingly.

Cordially yours
MORRIS MORRISON
Owner and Manager
Elite Haberdashery

Enclosure
MM/CC

Reproduce Mr. Jones' strong final letter to Mr. Morrison, observing these facts. On receipt of his first bill for \$1200. Mr. Morrison requested itemization of certain parts. Mr. Jones complied. He then requested an explanation of certain items. Mr. Jones explained. Mr. Morrison then wrote that he would send a check in a few days. He sent it only after Mr. Jones had written him a letter about it. The bank returned it to Mr. Jones marked *insufficient funds*. Mr. Jones wrote him another letter, enclosing the check. This evoked the above letter. On receiving it Mr. Jones called up the bank and was informed that Mr. Morrison's account was still insufficient to cover the amount. Mr. Jones knows that Mr. Morrison has a large account in another bank and that he is advertising on a large scale in all the metropolitan dailies. Mr. Morrison's letters are noted for their Beaunash quality. But he rarely signs them. CC does this, and then stamps them "Dictated by Mr. Morrison but signed during his temporary absence from the office."

- 8 The Excelsior Emporium, State Street and Trent Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey, is eager to settle the account of Sophie Elkinson (Mrs. Horace B.), 329 Stacy Boulevard West, Trenton, New Jersey. Mrs. Elkinson has had a credit account at the Emporium for some time. But for more than eight months now she has refused to settle her steadily increasing indebtedness tho the store has sent statements to her at regular intervals and has also written her several letters. Merchandise purchased by her over this period has been so unsatisfactory, she claims, that she will not pay her bills until everything has been made right. She has been buying more than usual because she has been furnishing a new house. She makes claims upon numerous articles—furniture, curtains, bedding, kitchen utensilry, rugs and carpets, and so forth. She has kept the Corrective Service Department of the store very busy indeed with her letters and telephone messages. She has likewise made the Department of Audits “look alive” returning bills for revision and correction—and then leaving them unpaid! But in all these controversies it must be admitted that she has had some justification for dispute tho not so much as she probably thinks she has.

Let it be assumed that you are manager of collections in The Excelsior Emporium, and that you have been authorized to get the account settled even tho this may entail certain compromises and concessions by your firm that are somewhat out of the ordinary. Write Mrs. Elkinson a strong final letter. In the body of this letter enclose two *tabulations*, one from the Corrective Service Department detailing claims, returns, and adjustments over the period above indicated, and one from the Department of Audits summarizing bills rendered, bills revised, and amounts now due for the same period. These tabulations embodied in your letter are to be based upon the foregoing facts but specific items are to be elaborated from your imagination.

CHAPTER NINE

THE LETTER AND THE SALESMAN

Sales letters are written to sell commodities, services, and ideas. A letter that is written with the aim to expand an old business or industry or to establish a new one, or to gain adherents to policies and enterprises, by the sale of stocks perhaps, is sometimes called a sales promotion or a promotional letter.

The advantages of selling by letter over selling by any other means have been listed and explained so often that it is trite to repeat them here. Yet they must be set down in the briefest possible terms in order that the text and the letters that follow may be clearly applied and understood.

In the first place, the prospect cannot "talk back" to a sales letter, except in that futile sense in which he sometimes splutters protest to his radio. It buttonholes or takes hold of him in private, in his home, directly, personally, immediately, point-blankly, without possible effective refutation then and there. It does all this, of course, provided it is a good rather than a bad or a wastebasket sales letter. It is, moreover, a comparatively inexpensive method of selling, even tho individual letter cost may mount as high as a dollar or more (see page 155). If, to quote John Howie Wright, past master of business letter psychology, anything that can be sold can be sold by mail, then sales letter writing should become as general as merchandising itself. And it has well-nigh done so. More, if good letters are and should be nothing more or less than just good talk, then sales letters should be of course good sales talk.

This is the first important principle of sales composition—it must be just good sales talk, and the author of it must never permit himself to overlook this fundamental fact. While it is true that there are many sales letters that "commit suicide," that by their own format and phraseology altogether forbid attention and defy interest, it is equally true that in no other branch of letter writing is there less excuse for such defection. Think of the items of absorbing interest that may be treated in sales letters about ap-

parently the most commonplace merchandise. Its evolution and history, its production and manufacture, its adaptations and adjustments, have real drama in them. So have the habits and customs, the infinite complexes and surging reactions, of the *genus homo* as he is cast for a part with this or that commodity or service or idea in the staging of sales. And the personnel and organization of big business and industry, with their marvelous interrelationships and machinelike adjustments and complicated ramifications, add to the glamorous opportunity of the sales letter writer if he has gumption enough to expose himself to their inspiration. To be dull, drab, dryas dust, or pedestrian in the face of all these challenges would be his one unpardonable sin.

His sales composition is to be written in specific rather than in general terms. It is to emphasize the affirmative rather than the negative. It is to avoid as far as possible the *we-* and the *I-*tone and to adopt as far as possible the *you*-tone (see page 124). It is to omit from both subject-matter and picture any suggestion whatever of exaggeration, presumption, aggressiveness, overzealousness, didacticism. It is to resort to facetiousness only with the greatest possible caution and discretion and circumspection.

It may seem ridiculous to give warning against putting anything in a sales letter that is foreign to the commodity or the prospect or the house; for it is so obvious that there should be no irrelevance in such composition. But full many a time and oft has a sales letter writer thought that he was breaking up sales foregrounds with a story when, as a matter of fact, he merely diverted attention or nullified it altogether. There is nothing wrong with opening a sales relationship with a good story *provided* that it is quite relevant, that it is brief, that there is no doubt about the prospect's getting the point of it in relation to the sale. Too often the introductory story does not make the congenial personal touch for which it is intended; too often it disestablishes rather than establishes confidence in the merits and the guaranties later to be expounded. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred the story intended to be ingratiating had better be omitted.

This is never more true than in those sales letters that are written in answer to inquiries, and in sales follow-ups. The temptation to wax facetious is difficult to resist in these two connections because they invite the atmosphere of familiar ground. But it is always better to answer inquiries seriously, with explicit explanation of topics about which inquiry is made. Never should an

inquiry be the cause of leading a sales letter writer to take the sale for granted. It invariably requires, rather, that he write out of experience and practice, that he win the prospect by logic and make no attempt to do so by hard insistence or urgency.

Sales literature may be either inductive or deductive, that is, it may begin with details and build to a general fact, or it may start with a big claim idea or a general statement or command or question, and work thru to more and more detailed expression. The first example below is deductive; the second, inductive.

1

Everybody needs a radio these days. You are no exception, are you?

Well, then, there is just one particular set for *you*—and for everybody else, as a matter of merit as well as of fact.

The *Sonoclear* is guaranteed. It is used by all the important people (see list of owners in the enclosed leaflet). AND it is equipped with the new tone-scale adjustment that enables you to enjoy all the radio pleasures and privileges without annoying your neighbors.

It is, moreover, a decorative piece. It will not dominate your other furniture, but it will add quietly and unaggressively to the furnishing of any kind of room. It is made in all styles and periods, and in all sizes.

The prices are so nominal as to be trifling, and the service guaranties are phenomenal.

2

The price of the new *Sonoclear* is—almost nothing at all, comparatively speaking.

As a piece of furniture it is beautiful. Made in all styles, sizes, and periods, it fits nicely and unobtrusively into the furnishings of any room without causing a riot.

The *Sonoclear* is guaranteed, and our service vigilance guarantees our guaranty. It is used by famous people the world over (see enclosed leaflet). AND it is equipped with the new tone-scale adjustment that enables you to use it freely whenever you wish, without exposing your neighbors to its intrusion.

There is just one particular set for *you*—and for everybody else, as a matter of merit as well as a matter of fact.

And everybody needs a radio these days. You are no exception, are you?

Writing or speaking that appeals primarily to the emotions is sometimes called human-interest expression or human-interest copy. Other names for it are character copy and short-circuit appeal. Writing or speaking that appeals primarily to the reason and judgment and general intelligence is sometimes called reason-why or long-circuit or “cerebral” copy. Writing or speaking that appeals primarily to the five senses is sometimes called sense-appeal copy. These three kinds of copy do not by any means always appear as strictly isolated styles. Many appeals in sales

literature make use of all three, and all three may be adapted to almost any sort of commodity. It is possible that women yield more easily to human-interest appeals; men to reason-why appeals; children to sense appeals. It is possible that luxuries are sold best thru human-interest appeals; that the idea of thrift is sold best thru reason-why appeals; that foodstuffs are sold best thru sense appeals. But these are unreliable generalities. Vitamins have brought reason-why into the sale of foods; thrift—savings banks, insurance, safety devices—may be sold quite as well thru human-interest as thru reason-why, especially since it has become fashionable; the luxury of travel may be presented thru the most logical of reasoning. One man's human-interest may be another man's reason-why, and vice versa.

This is human-interest appeal for class circulation:

"Beauty," said Henry Ward Beecher, "is God's trademark."

He was doing some advance advertising for our beauty products when he said this—or at least, so it would seem.

Our face powders, soaps, hair tonics, dentifrices, lip rouge, nail preparations, and the rest, are all made from the purest natural products gathered from God's landscapes—field and highway and mountain and meadow. They make for beauty, if used according to our prescriptions. And in this day and age to be beautiful has become an obligation.

Beauty gets you entrée. Beauty gets you distinction. Beauty gets you position and power. Who can gainsay any of these propositions?

AND—our products: make you beautiful *with safety*. There is not an atom of poisoned chemicals in a single one of them. So use them and be safe as well as beautiful.

This is reason-why appeal for class circulation:

There are men here in our own city—in your own neighborhood—who are getting their automobile insurance for twenty per cent less than you are probably paying for it, in a good sound company, mind you, with no sacrifice in service.

You are one of very few in your city to whom we are sending this invitation to become a policyholder. We select our policyholders very carefully and try to insure only those whose good loss records will enable a saving cost to all.

Since the company was organized nearly fifty years ago, we have returned to policyholders twenty cents on every dollar of premium paid us by them—a total of more than forty-one million dollars returned as dividends.

Don't decide *now* about buying your insurance from us.

Simply return the enclosed card and we shall tell you what the cost for your auto insurance will be and how much you may save by placing it with us. There is not the slightest obligation on your part. It simply gives us the chance to submit figures that you can check against the price you have been paying. If you are interested in our budget payment plan, we should like a notation to that effect.

So don't file this away to think over. There is nothing to puzzle you because you don't have to send one penny or promise anything. Just fill out the card and mail it now.

In this appeal, note how reason-why and human-interest are combined to make a skilful pleading:

Comfort was a strange and foreign word to Horace Blanford, until he owned a Millmobile. He takes pride in giving this testimony personally. "Riding on air," he says, "doesn't begin to do it justice. It's more like riding *thru* air to the music of some heavenly host! It gives me, after a hard day's work, the peace that passeth understanding, and the comfort that never was on sea or land.

"And not the least of its comfortable merits is the fact that it leaves nothing for the chauffeur to do but just to sit close at the wheel and—go. There's no new part to be repaired every hour or so; no engine trouble every time you get out on a pleasure trip fifty miles from nowhere; no hallelujah chorus of blow-outs whenever we strike rough goings, and none of the thousand and one other motor miseries.

"No, sir! It just goes and goes and goes. And we go with it. There hasn't been a single case of ill-health or ill-temper in the family since the Millmobile was brought into our midst. Even the chauffeur keeps well, and he used to be far from a well man whenever Saturday nights and Sundays came around! You've made us all happy."

Reason-why plus human-interest must make an irresistible combination in such a letter as this:

You have written to me so many times—and I to you—that it seems to me we must be personal friends by this time, even tho we have never met.

And, now, I am going to ask you to write to me again to tell me just exactly why you haven't resumed your courses this year. You can be frank with me. I shall understand, no matter what you say. I understand you—I have learned to do so thru the fine papers you sent in last year and the year before. So be perfectly frank—by return post—and be assured of a sympathetic reader.

You know that you ought not to drop the work now, don't you? You're right in the middle of things, with an excellent record on our books and with great promise as a student. There must be a reason for your dropping the work—and a good one. But I want to know what it is—I feel that I have a right to know it. And I'm positive I can help.

Just as a single talk is by no means always sufficient to complete a sale, so a single letter, no matter how well written, must very often fall short of sales achievement. Sales letters are therefore usually serialized, as certain other types of letters are, especially when it is desirable to conduct sales campaigns to develop a new field, to introduce a new or an improved commodity, to offer special inducements, or to stimulate and increase custom, and so forth. How many letters shall constitute a series in such a procedure depends upon too many factors—personal, industrial, commercial, utilitarian, general conditions—to admit of any dogmatic prescription. Sometimes three or four follow-ups to the first letter—perhaps only one or two—will be sufficient; sometimes a sales campaign will prepare as many as eighteen or twenty. The plan itself must be kept fluid and flexible, as must also the individual units in it. In some relationships—as in letters to dealers, for instance—the series may be made never-ending or continuous for the sake of keeping business interest perpetually spurred and stimulated.

Not only does the serialization of sales letters carry with it the virtue of frequent periodic sales contacts, but it makes possible also the point-by-point treatment of subject-matter. One point at a time may be taken up in successive letters. Such *monopoint* copy has the advantage, likewise, of building intensively and cumulatively thru a series of comparatively short letters, requiring the prospect to weigh one talking issue at a time. *Multipoint* copy—copy in which two or more points are treated in a single unit of sales composition—may be used to advantage in those cases where commodities require but simple presentation and where prospects are known to be easy or generous buyers. In most if not all other cases multipoint copy is likely to confuse prospect impression and thus delay prospect decision, unless it is most adroitly and masterfully composed. It is on record that sales made as result of monopoint appeals evoke fewer claims than those made as result of multipoint appeals.

The units in a follow-up series should be thoroly planned in advance, so that the whole group of letters may be seen as a whole from the beginning thru to the end. Only by such planning is it possible for one unit to lead from and into another, for needless repetitions to be avoided, and for new points of view to be refreshingly attacked. At the same time each follow-up should be written as if it were the first, last, and only appeal in the series, with a variety and a vitality of contact that make of it a com-

selling message. Unity, coherence, emphasis should in no way be impaired in the individual letter by the writer's consciousness that it is but a part of the whole series.

Mere pressure and importunity and plying for immediate action should have little if any place in sales follow-ups. Any note of reproof or censure for inaction is likewise fatal to sales. Rather, new facts, new phases, new experiences, new steps in logic, new pictures of prospect and commodity in relation—these are the elements in sales follow-up strategy that are usually found most effective. Such expressions as "Well, why haven't we heard from you?" and "Why in the world you're passing up this opportunity of the ages, we cannot understand!" are not only tactless and presumptuous, but they convey the further objectionable quality of scolding.

As above indicated, the three general fields of knowledge in which the alert sales manager must instruct and inspire his corps of letter writers are the merchandise (or the service or idea), the customer, and the sales operations connecting the two. As to the first of these, there is always a major selling issue to be supported by minor issues; as to the second, there is always a major class or personal psychology to be linked with minor individual tendencies; as to the third, there is always the general man-to-man approach to be made definite and specific thru the close-up relationship of commodity to personal needs and tastes. In addition, the sales manager will do everything possible to develop in his writers that important but elusive and abstract quality known as background, and he will stimulate performance among them by means of concrete rewards, promotions, and company appreciation in high places.

These ten pairs of major selling points are said to be the most prolific of sales, used by sales letter writers in connection with automobiles, building materials, clothing, drugs (including toilet articles and preparations), finance, food, furniture, radio, travel, utensilry (household):

- beauty and style
- cleanliness and purity
- comfort and convenience
- exclusiveness and distinction
- reputation and popularity

safety and security
 tastiness and wholesomeness
 thrift and economy
 wearability and endurance
 workability and serviceability

Knowledge of the product or commodity or merchandise or service or idea to be sold is, in and of itself, a stupendous requirement, if such knowledge is to be, as it ought to be, both theoretical and practical. Mere scattered information will not do. From the production of raw materials, thru manufacturing processes, to the customer's own hand, is in the case of many products a long and difficult and hazardous journey. From the original conception of an idea or a service, thru its development and modification, to its appropriate and useful adoption by man, is likewise a long and laborious passage. The courses of production, manufacture, distribution, consumption, ramified as each one is, must nevertheless be run by him who would write the best sales letters. They are the four grand divisions of the marketing process, from needle and nutmeg to ocean liner and skyscraper. Perhaps no salesman can know all that there is to be known about *his* special commodity, however small or insignificant it may seem to be, especially in this day when specialists are ever alert to unearth "more and more about less and less." But he is under heavy obligation to make an effort to do so for moral as well as for business reasons.

Knowledge of the customer or prospect implies at least equally formidable challenge. The letter goes to an individual, and the individual must therefore be known as such. But he must also be known as a composite, as a member of some group or groups, as male or female of a certain age and occupation and nationality, and thru other classifications. And while a good deal of such pigeon-holing must necessarily be approximate, it must nevertheless be used for what it is worth to the sales letter writer in personalizing his appeals, so that he will not write to merely abstract or theoretical beings or robots.

There are certain specific instincts and feelings upon which sales appeals may well be based in connection with given commodities and services and ideas. Insurance of all kinds, safety devices, burglar alarms, banks, for instance, may be sold thru appeals to the instinct of fear; correspondence courses, civic improvements,

contests and competitions—anything that has to do with self-improvement, ambition, ultimate success and achievement—thru appeals to the fighting instinct; foods of all kinds thru appeals to the feeding instinct; charitable institutions, hospitals, sailors' funds, and the like, thru appeals to sympathy; slippers, house robes, comfortable chairs, beds, cushions, thru appeals to love of ease and luxury; soap, preserved foods, vacuum cleaners, moth killers, thru appeals to the sense of cleanliness; sports, recreational opportunities, journeys, hotels, thru appeals to the play sense.

Sometimes a chart such as the following is helpful in focusing copy. The item in parenthesis after each is, of course, only one of many in the same category usually associated with the corresponding quality or instinct.

the animal in man

fear (tire chains)
fight (fire arms)
food (cereals)

the human in man

acquisitiveness (bonds)
comfort (bed lamps)
curiosity (novelties)

the social in man

imitation (ornaments)
play (bathing suits)
pride (automobiles)

the god in man

cleanliness (brushes)
devotion (gifts)
sympathy (charity)

Such groupings may be greatly extended. The police of a large city, making a raid on a gangsters' stronghold, unearthed classified customer lists of drinkers and gamblers and drug addicts in the community, a group that might perhaps in this connection be appropriately headed *the devil in man*.

*This appeal to the fear instinct is calculated to provoke serious thought on the part of the prospect:*¹

As you will see by the card, we have set aside for you one of our useful little memorandum books—gilt-edged, leather-bound, and very attractive.

We take this means of getting before you our new INCOME-FOR-LIFE PLAN.

Some day you hope to retire from active work. But WHEN? And HOW? Have you a plan? Or is it only a hope?

Retirement is a comforting thought or it is a nightmare, depending upon what we make of our working years. *Which will it be for you?*

Most men are confident of accumulating a snug sum before they

¹ This letter and the following are taken from *The Literature of Letters* by the same author.

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grow old. But, strangely enough, few men at sixty have anything to show for their life's work. Their saving is all done "tomorrow."

Our ~~INCOME-FOR-LIFE~~ PLAN will assure you absolute independence. Through scientific cooperation it does for you that which you could not do for yourself.

You'll find it intensely interesting. JUST FILL THE ENCLOSED CARD. No obligation.

This appeal to the fear instinct is logical and convincing:

Dread of the rainy day has been known to bring on paralysis and heart disease. Fear of evil days to come has been known to super-induce nervous breakdown and even death. Panicky and palpitating temperaments have been thrown entirely out of balance by the tragic contemplation of "over the hill."

And it is all so unnecessary! Our new savings-insurance policy takes all the terror and all the horror out of the latter half of life. What's more to the point, it takes all the risk out of the evil and ruinous days that are "always to come."

Just fill in the enclosed stamped return card, and you will receive, without the slightest obligation of any kind, definite information as to just how, through a little reasonable saving as the days go by, you may set your mind and heart at rest about future dangers that the gods may seem to be holding awesomely before you.

There is never any such thing as being down and out—never, that is, where this savings-insurance policy is permitted to do its work. There is never anything but being *up and in* hereafter for you, if you avail yourself of the generous terms of this antidote to latter-day dangers.

Pianissimo the poverty panic, and be an *up-and-inner*, not a down-and-outer.

The fight instinct, especially at election time, can usually be depended upon to reveal itself if it is properly appealed to:

Are you an intelligent voter, or just an automatic one? Has your mental and character right to vote ever been challenged at the polls? Has any one ever yet dared to call you a ballot-box slacker? Is your political citizenship characterized by grit and stamina, or are you apathetic and cowardly in matters that pertain to good government?

Oh, don't trouble, please! We know the answers to all these questions, for we've taken the trouble to look *you* up. We know how you voted last time. We can prophesy how you will vote this time. We know that you'll feel compelled bright and early next Tuesday morning to go to the polls and cast a vote that tokens genuine forethought and concern about good government.

That is to say, we are positively sure that your preelection reading and listening and thinking will obligate you to vote constructively for those men and women on the ticket who stand for the very best things by way of good government—fair taxation adjustments, good schools, efficient police, unequivocal Americanism, and all the rest.

And this means that you will be obligated to vote destructively—to vote *out* of office all those pretenders to statesmanship and community spirit who have brought us to such sorry pass in these political fundamentals.

This is not a partizan letter. If it were, we should say very different things indeed.

It is a *good citizenship* letter—a fortissimo letter.

THINK, MAN, THINK! AND THEN—VOTE!!

The food instinct is here linked with human-interest clearly and rationally, without sentiment:

The milk and cream of the Baby-Brand Conservatories have time and time again stood the hundred-per-cent qualification test of the Rockefeller Institute.

This means that the Baby-Brand Conservatory Products possess the highest possible caloric and vitamin food values for the members of your family, and especially for the kiddies.

And this is all true because Baby-Brand milk and cream come from cows that are not only contented but happy and even enthusiastic about their work. They are fed on siloed clover and corn the year round. In summer they browse in meadows knee-deep in rich weedless grass, and drink at the brink of pearly gurgling mountain streams. In winter they are groomed mornings and evenings in white-tiled sanitary stalls, and are served by white-suited, white-gloved attendants.

From the time our milk comes from the cow until it is delivered at your door, its temperature, as it passes through the various processes of cooling, setting, creaming, skimming, pasteurization, and so forth, is carefully guarded. You are aware, of course, that milk that is permitted at any step of its processing to remain too warm or too cool for any length of time, loses its life and becomes flat and stale to the taste. Temperature is not a whit less important to milk than it is to wine. Every department in our establishment is likewise standardized in the matter of cleanliness. From vat rooms to bottling closets all our employees are uniformed from top to toe in purest and cleanest white. Where the food of babes is concerned, surely cleanliness is godliness.

The satisfying flavor; the creamy texture; the foody substance; the fresh, life-giving quality; the rich, tasty frothiness; the savory, saccharine smack of summer greenery; the mellow, wholesome, appetizing body tone—of the Baby-Brand Conservatory Products—all derive

from the breeding and the treatment of the cows as well as from the handling of their milk, once they have given it over.

Some poet or other has called our output

The nectar of the milkmaids—
The ambrosia of the dairy.

Perhaps he was overenthusiastic. But we should like to know what YOU think.

The sales operations calculated to establish mutually profitable relationship between product and prospect—to make the one a custom and the other a customer—have been variously defined and explained. As in practically all other human relations, the element of personality is the one most decisive influence. Rule and regulation may be thrown to the winds when a salesman has “a certain way with him.” But he is acknowledgedly in the minority. The ranks of salesmanship, like those of other pursuits in which the demand for genius and personality is greater than the supply, must contain many—a majority always—who need to follow the rules of the game, who can deviate from those rules only with considerable risk.

It is pretty generally agreed that, in order to impress any one and make him act as you wish him to, it is necessary, first, to catch his attention, then to develop this into interest or desire, then to build interest into belief or conviction, then to get him to resolve to do something, and *then* to induce him to act. Interest is attention grown up; belief is interest crystallized; resolution is belief in action.

These steps are sometimes set down as the developmental steps in sales talking and writing. They are by no means always usable in quite such cut-and-dried fashion as the following formula would seem to indicate. But they are good to know and to think about, especially if you have to treat with business men and with things for sale. After all, the person who can write strong, dignified, persuasive sales letters—letters that *talk* strongly, dignifiedly, and persuasively—is a good salesman, whether or not he bothers about patterned procedures. It is the “perfect bedside manner” that counts for most, the ability to leave the prospect with the feeling that he is a pretty good fellow able to take care of himself and to spend his money wisely. Too often he is made to feel that he is rather a poor sort without much education and without qualification to express worthy opinions or to make wise decisions.

ATTRACT ATTENTION

- by arousing curiosity
- by appealing to and featuring you
- by catch-word, phrase, or sentence
- by hint of news, trade or general
- by line, color, diagram, arrangement
- by avoiding all intimation of command, superiority, self-reference, excessive advertising tone

DEVELOP INTEREST

- by appealing to fundamental emotions and sentiments
- by referring to conditions and happenings of general interest
- by playing up certain types and classes of people
- by local and special human-interest appeals
- by stimulating an interrogative attitude in the prospect
- by featuring some unique or novel detail about the commodity

ESTABLISH BELIEF

- by complete knowledge of commodity
- by ability to tell all about commodity
- by connecting commodity with needs and desires of the prospect
- by description, exposition, argument, and good stories
- by illustration of all kinds
- by stressing superior points with superior argument
- by concretizing the sales situation
- by enclosures, such as charts, samples, catalogs

INSTIGATE RESOLUTION

- by showing that nothing is too much trouble
- by evincing no impatience or irritability
- by failure to recognize any antagonism on part of prospect
- by ready recognition of merits of competing commodity
- by respectful attention to and interest in anything prospect may say
- by honest, strictly-as-represented inducement, such as guaranties, coupons, stamps, "last chance," "closing out," "money refunded if not satisfied," "special offer"

INDUCE ACTION

- by unfailing optimism as to making sale
- by autosuggestion thruout the sale
- by summing up the principal selling points
- by being ready with order blank and other sales-closing machinery
- by requesting verification of name and address and other shipping data
- by telling good wind-up story

.....

FOLLOW-UP

- by following up purchase and purchaser
- by frequent inquiry as to how the purchase has pleased
- by evincing readiness to adjust anything that is not satisfactory
- by missing no opportunity to call attention, in a postscript perhaps, to new stock, improvement on old lines, changed policy, and other opportunities for further dealings

There is a necessary caution, namely: Take *cum grano* a good deal that is spoken and written about the "higher salesmanship." Much fun is poked at the poetics and psychologies and efficiencies that are brought to bear upon the science and the art of salesmanship. The high-powered specialist on form letters is distinctly *persona non grata* in many quarters because he has at times stressed pyrotechnics of style at the expense of accuracy in description of goods and quotation of prices. The hair-trigger intuitions and steel-trap decisions that characterize much so-called efficiency psychology today are exaggerations, if not aberrations, and common sense is openly in revolt against them. The salesman may go in for psycho-analytics and subtleties of personality interpretation, if he cares to, and thus try to make a superman of himself. The probabilities are, however, that he will do better just to work like a Trojan to sell things to folks according to the more or less old-fashioned man-to-man methods.

It is frequently said that sales letters should be psychologically timed as to mailing, that they should be mailed so that they will not be received on Monday mornings, for instance, or on mornings following special holidays, or at such other times as will find prospects preoccupied or otherwise non-receptive. This advice is good. Sales appeals naturally have a better chance with the prospect who is working under normal conditions than with the one who is rushed or harried or unoriented. But the generalization must not be too strongly pressed. "Washday morning" may be an excellent time for the busy housewife to receive a letter about electric washers, and the day following Thanksgiving or Christmas has long since been famous for the sale of sedatives.

This is calculated to catch and hold attention:

Have you seen the New Burton Twelve?

We cannot send you a sample by mail, unfortunately. But if we could you'd be so delighted with it that you'd pay cash to keep it, and ignore our unusual payment plan.

More anon. But will you please keep the enclosed photograph, and read two or three times the note on the back of it about trading in your old car for a New Burton Twelve.

This car and this opportunity were made for YOU.

The prospect's interest is invited here:

Here's another photograph—somebody's wife and kiddies who are enjoying the country of a Sunday afternoon in a New Burton Twelve.

Did you read about its appearance at the automobile show last week, and about the sensation it made? There were feature stories in all the papers about the shiftless and starterless car-miracle.

But unique as these things are, they are nevertheless nothing more than details in comparison with the tout ensemble—the body grace and poise, the artistic Greek proportions, the nose height and impressiveness from the front, and all the rest of it.

Really, they would appeal to your wife and kiddies, wouldn't they?

This makes assurance doubly sure:

It's a great business car. It's a great pleasure car. It can be run by any member of the family—from the sixteen-year-old to the octogenarian grandma. As a matter of fact it runs itself.

There is no gearshifting to bother and confuse. There is no starter—the accelerator starts and runs and regulates. The hydraulic brakes make safety a foregone conclusion. And the general comfort and adaptability and convenience of the inside of the New Burton Twelve are the ultimate diction in body novelty and elaborateness.

Here's a diagram that may help to justify our enthusiasm and confirm our faith in this newest of motor vehicles. We hope it will make the workings of this marvelous car clear and simple to you. Note that the machine is really cut straight thru lengthwise and crosswise, so that you can see every possible bit of machinery at work or ready for work. Follow the arrows from the wheel, from the accelerator, and from the brakes and you will see exactly what happens when you press any one of them.

Whoever said that the simplest things are the most beautiful (or was it the other way around?) must have been thinking of the New Burton Twelve—in advance.

Let it now be resolved that a new car is sold!

Your old car may be traded in at an unbelievable allowance. Your New Burton Twelve may be "taken away with you" on an unbelievable arrangement. Indeed, this whole business of introducing the New Burton into the family circle is incredibly easy and satisfactory—and delightful.

Just drive up to our place tomorrow—any time. Bring the family along. Take all your togs out and come right in and settle yourselves and everything in one of the New Burtons standing on the sales floor. And then—glide out and in and thru and among—and the car is yours for keeps. There'll be no mention of money or anything, if you will just fill out and sign the enclosed questionnaire—a perfectly harmless permit-sheet authorizing you to drive this car for one day just to test it and get the feel of it.

Note the service clause especially, and also the substitute privileges at the end of your first year with Burton. Please check up on your first day to see that everything that is claimed for this marvelous

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new car is true. Test it everywhere—up hill and down dale, thru traffic tangles and out on the straight and level—and then come in and tell us what you think of its performance.

Then, if you want to, you may leave Burton with us and take your old car back! But you "won't wanna." . . .

Delay is but the darkness before the dawn of sale:

You found everything strictly as represented, did you not?

You liked the automatic shifting and the accelerator starter and the hydraulic brakes, did you not?

And you must admit that the riding values of the car surpass anything you have ever known in automobile history—what?

So now, here's the closing "machinery" for the deal—your old car plus so much (very little really)—and the New Burton Twelve left at your door with its multitudinous equipment and blessing.

By the way, don't decide for yourself. Ask Madam And whatever she says we'll accept as law!

The blue is the service guaranty; the white is the transference of insurance; and the pink is the graduated bill just awaiting our Thank You.

The service follow-up must be vigilant and sincere:

Why haven't we heard from you?

You have been Burtoning, now, for exactly four weeks. You must have run four hundred miles and you should let us look the machine over carefully.

No news is good news, we are sure. Yet, there are doubtless adjustments to be made, and it's just like a Burton never to let you know—never to cause a bit of trouble.

Bring the car in as soon as possible and avail yourself of our expert servicing free of any charges whatever—according to contract.

Sales letters did much some years ago to bring business expression into disrepute. Their tone was often so flippant or "smart-alec" and their form so loose or irresponsible that the term *commercial English* was scorned in many quarters. But persistent campaigning for better business letters and for better business writing and speaking in all fields has changed this. Today the best business houses turn out much writing that is even better than that to be found in many of the novels, biographies, poems, and books of general literature heralded in advertisements and reviewing columns.

This letter attempts to revive a service. The marginal notes mark the steps in its organization:

BASIC DATA	{ It has just been brought to our attention that you have recently closed your account with this bank.
YOUR REASONS	{ Have we made any mistake in handling your business, or failed in any way to render you the best possible service? Please use the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope, won't you, to tell us just why you felt obliged to withdraw?
OUR SERVICE ATTITUDE	{ We feel a strong personal interest in every one of our customers as well as in every one who has ever been one of our customers. A renewal of your account will be more than welcome at any time, and we sincerely hope that in your case that renewal will be made in the very near future. If we can do anything to hasten it, please say <i>what</i> in your reply to this letter.

Good will is not only maintained but expanded by such a message as this:

This letter has nothing to do with any financial transaction between you and us. It is an acknowledgment of a happy relationship that has existed and is accompanied with the hope that this relationship has been as pleasant to you as to us.

Everywhere about us we see signs of distrust and hear notes of discord. Our relations, however, have been more closely cemented this year. Perhaps it is because you and we have kept something of the Christmas spirit in our attitude toward each other thruout the year. Perhaps if more of this spirit were shown in meeting the large problems of the day, those problems would begin to disappear.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This is a strong human-interest appeal that few women would wish to resist even if they could:

When you are shopping in ———— hardly a day passes that you do not wish for some place to leave your bundles—some convenient corner that you can look upon as your personal headquarters.

You do not like the nervous haste of the interurban waiting-room or the lobby of a hotel. It is too hard there to find your friends or for them to find you in the crowds.

Your personal preference points to a central location where you can meet your friends or rest quietly and comfortably for a few minutes at odd times during the day.

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We considered these things very carefully when we planned the arrangements of this new store. We want to make it convenient and "homey" for every woman who chooses to enter the store. It is but one of the many helpful services that we hope to make pleasing to every woman who shops in ———.

Many avail themselves of the conveniences of our rest room every day. They find the congenial surroundings restful, the refined atmosphere pleasant. Please accept this as an invitation to make our store your home when you are in ———.

The central location of The Ossry and Company Store makes it easy to find. [Here add distance and direction from interurban station; distance and direction from nearest well-known building or public point.]

You will receive a cordial welcome here. The helpful service and convenience will be our welcome to you. If you choose to look at merchandise in any department, you will receive courteous attention and considerate suggestions by salespeople who are thoroly acquainted with the goods they handle.

This is sound reason-why appeal addressed to the "woman of the house":

In New York City last year over two and a half million electric light, gas, and merchandising bills were paid by means of checks.

This resulted in an incalculable saving of time and trouble for the women who pay the regular monthly bills.

We fancy that Chicago women, too, would find this method of payment safe, economical, and convenient. And so we are opening several neighborhood agencies, the one nearest to you being at ———. This particular agency is open now, and if you care to make use of it, just stop in some day and ask for our Mr. Ogden.

The charge for this service is only one half of one per cent on every one hundred dollars' worth of checks used. Almost trivial, isn't it?

The bank sends out this promotional copy to a selected list and gets the deserved profitable returns:

We are extending an invitation to representative merchants and manufacturers thruout the United States to avail themselves of the numerous facilities we offer. Our reason for doing this is that we want to cooperate with them in increasing their present business, and to assist them in developing new business at home as well as abroad.

In this connection we have considered the value of our service with reference to your particular business, and we believe that a relationship between and our institution will be mutually advantageous. Please bear in mind that this suggestion is not made with the idea of disturbing your present banking connections in but rather to supplement them for the purpose stated above.

TAKE A LETTER, PLEASE!

We feel that our facilities are such that you will find more than satisfaction in any connection you may wish to form with us. We shall consider it a privilege to serve you.

The wholesaler writes a strong cooperative appeal to the dealer:

Forty per cent of the motorists in this country ride on Tampter Tires. Many of these wise people live right in your own town. That dealer who is prepared to service them is on the way to fame and fortune.

You run a service station. You sell tires. And you have written to ask intelligent and promising questions about Tampters. We think your inquiry is important enough to justify our sending one of our men up to see you. He will be there on Thursday of this week. If this is not convenient for you, please wire us collect and we shall try to make a date that is more convenient for you.

Incidentally he will bring with him a batch of letters from your community, all of them asking questions about these new tires and all of them revealing between the lines an interest that can soon be kindled into enthusiasm by your expert salesmanship.

We enclose a telegraph blank properly executed for you to use in case you have to postpone our agent's visit. But we are hoping that you won't have to ask for a postponement.

A change of policy is skilfully used for the enforcement of a genial sales talk:

We have counted you as a good friend and valued customer of our store during the many years that we sold exclusively for cash and during the few years when we carried a limited number of charge accounts.

During the past few months, we have experienced a growing demand for cash savings instead of credit privileges, and we are therefore returning to an all-cash policy on May 28 of this year.

It is our plan to conduct a series of private sales which will be limited by invitation to those who, like yourself, have previously been accorded charge-account privileges. With your permission we shall notify you of these events as they take place.

We are hoping, of course, that this policy will be approved by you, and that you will find the added savings to be a welcome substitute for your former charge-account privilege.

We write to you personally because, while this change of policy affects but a small number of our patrons, it happens to affect those whom we regard as our most valued customers.

Number three of the following problem is solved just below. You should try numbers one and two yourself.

The new Janus Fountain Pen is so constructed that it may be used for red ink and for black. The cylindrical ink holder is partitioned. By pressing a small button in the top, the side containing black ink begins to flow and the black pen is pressed down into place. Auto-

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matically the red flow is closed, and the red pen pulled up within the frame. There is a gage to adjust the flow in case red and black are needed in rapid alternation. And in this event both pens may be left down at the same level. Inasmuch as the pens are round, they operate as well on the one side as on the other. (1) Write a letter to stationers, selling this new idea in fountain-pen manufacture, and urging them to include it in their fall orders. (2) Write a letter to be sent to district sales managers, explaining to them that you have sent a letter to dealers, and telling them to follow up. (3) Write a letter to be sent to the homes of school children, selling the new pen to them. Assume that school is about to open for the fall term.

And the first pin-money of the school year is spent in the twinkling of an eye!

You will be interested, we think, in the new Janus Fountain Pen, especially at this time of year when you are taking up your studies again.

The filling cylinder of this pen is partitioned so that one side may carry black ink, let us say, and the other side red ink. Instantaneous alternation of flow may be made by means of a press-button at the top of the pen which not only releases the ink on one side or the other but also at the same time lowers the pen required for use at paper level and lifts the one not required. These pens, by the way, are round like the leads in a pencil, and are usable from any side and from any angle.

All Janus pens are made up in hexagonal form to prevent rolling, and in a number of colors and artistic designs. Prices range from two dollars all the way up to fifty dollars. Instalment arrangements may be made with your cooperative shop. And you may even trade in your old pens at a substantial allowance, as we are able to re-process them and thus convert them into the double-flow Janus style.

You will see at once the advantage of this new school utensil. You do not have to carry two pens. You do not have to switch from one pen to another clumsily when you wish to write two-color copy as you increasingly do. In your own private account book—and all students are keeping such books in these difficult days—you may automatically differentiate credits and debits by color and see at a glance where and how you stand! Incidentally, Janus sales to financial institutions have been phenomenal, and for obvious reasons.

Most of our prospects, indeed, become customers once they have been privileged to write a single sentence with Janus. The enclosed folder, with addressed stamped envelope attached, tells you how you may secure one of these pens on trial with subsequent easy payments. This very letter, by the way, is a photostat of a letter that was written with a Janus straightaway in five minutes with all the red trimmings.

This problem calls for unusual treatment. It suggests a new idea in cigaret merchandising.

There may be room for another cigaret on the market. We shall say so, at any rate. It is a blend of Old World and New World tobacco.

Not only is it "smooth" and "satisfying" and "oriental" and "Virginia," all in one, but it is also a "savory smoke." It is made in a variety of sizes, and with straw, cork, plain, gold, and Russian tips. There is, in addition, a special rose-leaf tip made up in special boxes for clubs, colleges, and certain hotels. As this rose-leaf tip is perishable in about twenty-four hours, only such quantity is prepared for daily consumption as advance orders justify. Let us assume that you are trying to get haberdashers to take up this new cigaret as a side line. Write a strong introductory letter to the highest-class haberdashers in a city, setting forth the special features of the new cigaret, offering to furnish an especially attractive display case for introductory purposes, and making especially liberal terms. The old spelling—*cigarette*—probably would be desirable in such a letter.

The solution sells both a new policy and a new commodity:

If a druggist may sell everything from fly-swatters to libraries, there would appear to be no logical reason why a haberdasher may not sell cigarettes—especially smart, unique, exclusive cigarettes.

You will be interested, we think—and *hope*—in this idea. Certainly cigarettes are today well-nigh a component part of the costuming of the well-dressed man and woman. Shirts and blouses, pajamas and suitings, top coats and lounge coats are always provided with cigarette pockets. It would seem the natural thing, therefore, for the high-class haberdasher to make the innovation of a subsidiary offering to his customers by way of a distinctive cigarette with accessories.

Science has achieved a tasty, foody blend of Turkish and Virginia tobaccos that is likely to appetize the smoking world to the point of prejudice. We are privileged to be the sole distributors of this new *TURKVIR* brand, and we are extremely eager to develop the new haberdashery field of cigarette retailing because it seems to us to be a logical—if not the most logical—source of supply to the individual customer.

TURKVIRS are made up in all seasonal and fabric tints and shades, and with every sort of tip. In particular there is a new experimental rose-leaf tip which perishes, it is true, in twenty-four hours, but which during the twenty-four hours is rapidly becoming *the* cigarette of the élite to whom you preeminently cater. In keeping, there are, of course, packaging in a variety of modernistic tones and display stands and cabinets to harmonize with salesroom furnishings. But more of these later.

As you well know, a cigarette is frequently the agent par excellence of sales induction. It very often puts a customer at ease, relieves of hurry and reticence, and establishes natural and congenial relationship at once. Moreover, our grandmothers used to say, didn't they? that tobacco smoke is sanitary—keeps moths away and eats dust. Certain of our brands, however, are slightly scented for those of your customers who prefer delicate aromas to *naturelle*.

You have been selected by us as the sole dealer in your community for this new cigarette and for this new departure in tobacco merchandising. You are our choice because our investigators have found

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that you represent top-notch quality in goods, in custom, and in policy. It is our sincere hope that you will fall in with the idea, and permit us to send our representative to see you regarding installation and terms. We enclose a sample package containing various styles of TURKVIRS, together with a stamped addressed envelope which we hope you will be prompted to use after you have taken your first puff.

The following appeal was made by a baker to all business men in his neighborhood who passed his shop to and from work. It was printed on paper bags about the size of the regular letterhead. It was dated and personally signed.²

"What's in the bag?"

Can you picture the delight of the ones at home when you enter the house with an unexpected bag full of "something"?

It means more than you think—to *you* as well as to them.

Why not occasionally take home a bag full of our fancy cookies or sugar buns to surprise the home folks with?

You'll find it a good stunt.

Our little bakery is only a few steps from your office. Drop in to-night and get a dozen or half a dozen of something nice. You won't be set back financially enough to figure on.

Nice fresh baked pastry will be in the window and on the counters for your selection tonight and every night hereafter.

Come on.

The following letter by Charles A. Shaw won the first prize in the contest conducted by the magazine, Correct English.³

Counter freezers may seem alike to those not familiar with the various makes, but once see a Taylor operate—once talk with the man who owns one—and you'll ask yourself these questions:

Why buy a freezer not time-tested for performance and life?

Why buy a freezer with longer freezing time—that makes less ice-cream an hour?

Why buy a freezer that costs more to operate and maintain?

In short, you will consider nothing but Taylor—the only time-proved freezer, the only freezer that has been on the market long enough to have proved long life. Taylor freezes faster—makes more ice-cream an hour. Taylor is the most efficient and economical freezer. Taylor costs less to operate and maintain.

² From "A Full-Baked Idea" by Clarence T. Hubbard, in *The Mailbag*. Used by permission.

³ Used by permission of the editor, Josephine Turck Baker.

These facts are proved by the enclosed folder. After months of comparison the United States Government selected Taylor because its engineers found that Taylor is the most efficient and economical freezer—that Taylor's low operating and maintenance cost makes Taylor the lowest-priced freezer.

Don't be misled by low initial costs. Taylor's economical operation and low-cost upkeep soon compensate for slightly higher initial cost. Invest a little more now—save a great deal later.

*Owners of private homes in the country, managers of country clubs, and all others interested in seeing a dozen blades of grass grow where only a straggling one stands now, were successfully appealed to and reasoned with by this letter: **

Your lawn was caught in a tight place this summer. It couldn't run away from the heat. While mortals were hunting the shade, going to swimming pools and beaches, sitting in basements or in air-cooled theaters, your grass had to stay right out there and take it!

The chances are that some grass which looked very sickly during the midst of the drouth will recover. Some will need to be replaced. Bare spots should not be overlooked, for if grass is not put there, weeds will soon take possession.

Lawn Care sets forth the advantages of fall seeding. Perhaps to old friends we should apologize for repeating this advice every year. Our reason is that it takes a lot of repetition to break down old traditions. Spring is still the customary time to sow even though Mother Nature has been doing her seeding in the fall since the beginning of time.

Drouth and extreme heat cut severely into the seed production of many turf grasses this year. Anticipating this, we protected ourselves against price advances which have lately occurred. We feel particularly pleased in not having to raise our prices. Cheap seed will be a greater risk than ever. A "dash" of permanent grasses will be lost in a maze of chaff and outlaw varieties.

Here is the August *Lawn Care*, No. 41 in the series, and the familiar price list with a reply envelope. We'll welcome the opportunity to serve you again. Better send your order along now so you'll be ready for September seeding.

*These two letters to users carry cumulative sales exposition to the individual and his plant personnel: **

1

Perhaps you haven't heard about them—and you won't find their names on your payroll. But a large number of men have been working for you during the past few years.

* Used by permission of O. M. Scott and Sons, Marysville, Ohio.

* Used by permission of Westinghouse Electric Supply Company.

THE LETTER AND THE SALESMAN 425

They've been working to help you improve the efficiency of your motorized factory equipment . . . to cut down maintenance costs . . . to remove safety hazards. And the result of their work can save you a great deal of money if you will take advantage of it.

Briefly, these men are Westinghouse engineers who have developed an entirely new and revolutionary line of motor starting apparatus. This is something you are doubtless always interested in, but right now is the opportune moment to become *especially* interested, because the new Westinghouse Linestarters contain a feature never before applied to this type of equipment—the Westinghouse “De-ion” Arc Quencher.

This exclusive feature brings you motor starting apparatus of greater SAFETY . . . improved RELIABILITY . . . more COMPACT and ACCESSIBLE design—apparatus that will OUTLAST your most optimistic predictions, because it instantly quenches the arcs which constantly shorten the life of ordinary motor starters.

We could tell you more about this latest Westinghouse development, and show you how economically it can replace any of your equipment that isn't up to the standards you would like to see. Won't you indicate your interest on the enclosed reply card and return it at our expense? We'll promise to take up no more of your time than you think is profitable to you.

2

The old saying, “A chain is no stronger than its weakest link,” has been applied to almost everything under the sun. But we don't know of any place where it's more applicable than to the electrical equipment that powers your machines.

If trouble occurs anywhere along the line . . . in the wiring, in the circuit protecting switch, in the motor starter, or in the motor itself . . . then your operator, machine, and production stand idle until repairs are made.

That's why we believe you will be glad to learn of an entirely new development Westinghouse has made in motor starting equipment. A time-proved principle of arc interruption has been applied to Westinghouse Linestarters, making possible the most important advance in the entire history of motor control equipment.

This feature is the “De-ion” Arc Quencher. You have probably heard of it, and perhaps you are now using Westinghouse safety switches or Nofuze circuit breakers that depend upon it. But it's obvious that the continuous-operating motor starter needs its advantages even more than equipment designed for intermittent duty. And that is why every new Westinghouse Linestarter has the SAFETY, RELIABILITY, LONG LIFE, and COMPACT DESIGN that only “De-ion” arc-interruption can provide.

Why not look over your motor-control situation right now and see where new Westinghouse equipment can save you money? If you're skeptical about the advantages of the “De-ion” feature, we'll welcome the opportunity to give you facts and figures. Just indicate your interest on the enclosed reply card.

*These two excellent appeals to machinery builders are persuasive. Note the automatic reply device provided in each.**

1

To meet your requirements, the motor starting equipment on your machines should combine attractive appearance . . . compact design . . . ease of installation . . . safety . . . freedom from maintenance . . . and absolute reliability. The new — series of Westinghouse Linestarters meets and exceeds these specifications to such a remarkable degree that it really falls in the class of red-hot industrial News.

The secret behind these new starters is a famous and exclusive principle, time-tested in Westinghouse safety switches and Nofuze circuit breakers, and now for the first time applied to Linestarters of every standard NEMA size up to and including 150-ampere ratings. It is the "De-ion" Arc Quencher, which divides and extinguishes the arc when contacts are opened, preventing the usual flash and flame.

This feature makes possible a large number of advantages which ordinary motor starters cannot possess. The safety problem is completely banished. Life of contacts is increased immeasurably, with improved reliability at every point. However, this principle permits an especially compact and accessible design, which is easy to install under any and all conditions.

You will appreciate many of these features which help you to solve your design problems—and your customers will appreciate every one of them, too. There are many other interesting points of superiority, which only actual inspection can fully reveal. We shall welcome an opportunity to prove to you everything we claim for the new Westinghouse Linestarters. The enclosed reply card, filled out and mailed, will bring a representative with samples and full details.

2

The satisfaction of your customers depends not only upon the performance of the machines you build, but upon the reliability of the motor and control equipment supplied with them. Even though it bears an outside maker's name, you cannot afford dissatisfaction with a single part.

So it's important from every standpoint to keep abreast of improvements in this field—and the most revolutionary improvement we have heard about recently is the new Westinghouse "De-ion" Linestarter. When a starter comes out with a new and exclusive feature that instantly solves 90% of all maintenance problems, it should certainly be worth investigating. And that's exactly what the "De-ion" Arc Quencher does, on every size and type in the new Westinghouse line.

This feature permits the kind of compact design you are looking for, without sacrificing any of the desirable features you want. But its advantages from your customer's point of view are even more numerous and important. Instant arc-interruption prevents flash and pitting of contact points, promoting safety and long life. Improved reliability cuts maintenance costs to the vanishing point. Under the most difficult and trying conditions, these starters guarantee years and years of faithful service.

May we show you a sample and go into further detail with you on your starter requirements? This new development is its own best salesman. May we have an indication of your interest on the enclosed reply card? A representative with samples and complete information will gladly call at your convenience.

* Used by permission of Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company.

THE LETTER AND THE SALESMAN 427

*These two letters to contractors speak with conviction and authority:**

1

Just as everybody's customers are looking for a better buy, so are yours looking for a better buy in the machinery drives you install. If you provide it, it won't take long for the news to get around about your service and the quality of your jobs.

Westinghouse, for years, has built into its motors the basic things that give them longer life—"More Mileage" that accounts for the excellent reputation and ready acceptance of Westinghouse Motors throughout industry. The attached reprint explains in an interesting and simple way what these factors are and why they put more mileage into motors. Ads like these appear in magazines read by your customers from month to month and establish an easy, simple basis for judging motor values. You can very profitably capitalize on this.

To assist you Westinghouse is offering a new booklet *Facts about Westinghouse Motors and Control* that greatly simplifies the selection of the correct type of motor for a given job. Also it recommends the correct control and shows how it fits into the circuit.

Send today for this booklet. Then ask the Westinghouse representative to give you the complete story on "more motor mileage" and how you can use it to interest your customers. Use the enclosed card. No obligation.

2

It's real news when a development like the new Westinghouse "De-ion" Linestarter comes along, and we hope you'll pardon us for being pretty enthusiastic. After all, when you've been building A.C. motor starters for nearly fifty years, it takes something extremely important to be classed as the greatest forward step the field has ever seen. And when you consider the advantages that the famous "De-ion" principle permits, you simply can't help conceding this is true.

Take safety, for example. Here's a starter that instantly interrupts the arc at the contact opening—snuffs it out without the usual flash or flame. Take reliability and long life. Abolishing the arc means practically no deterioration of contacts, and adds years to the dependable life of the starter as a whole. These things are important in safety switches and Nofuze circuit breakers, where the "De-ion" principle has been used by Westinghouse for a number of years. But they are even more important in a Linestarter, which is operated much more frequently.

In addition to the exclusive "De-ion" feature, Westinghouse Linestarters in all sizes offer many other advantages to your customers. The complete line has been restyled, and is now the most attractive in appearance on the market. Electrically and mechanically, it is the most simple, positive, and completely accessible starter you could possibly recommend—and the *easiest to install*.

* Used by permission of Westinghouse Electric Supply Company.

This new development offers you a real opportunity to secure plus business in replacing antiquated equipment with starters that are years ahead of competition. For additional facts and figures, simply mail the enclosed reply card.

Below are four "unbeatable" letters for the establishment or the maintenance (or both) of interest and support. The copy display is in each case as attractive and appealing as the content is intriguing.⁸

1

If you are planning even the smallest expenditure for your house or garden this year, this letter has important news for you.

House & Garden, the finest American magazine in its field, offers you a special introductory subscription of . . .

5 ISSUES FOR \$1 . . .

. . . and this one dollar investment will bring you a dividend of pleasure and actual money-saving value far beyond the dreams of avarice.

For one dollar you secure the services of architects, decorators, and gardeners whose every word is worth its weight in gold. You visit beautiful houses and gardens all over the country . . . you get brass-tacks information, about such matters as roofing and plumbing and painting, written by unfoolable authorities . . . you learn the latest trends in decoration—color schemes, furniture, fabrics . . . you get scientific instructions for making your garden the beauty-spot you want it to be . . . you have a staff of experts constantly on tap for advice concerning your particular problems. . . .

And for one dollar you insure every penny that you plan to spend on your house throughout the coming season. Even a single lamp, improperly chosen or placed, can ruin a whole room. Even the finest bulb will never blossom if it isn't given the right care.

House & Garden is your answer to these and a thousand other questions. It shows you how to avoid the worries and the expensive mistakes . . . how to get the most in value and beauty when you buy.

Right now—before you make a single purchase—put one dollar into *House & Garden* insurance.

2

Your last issue is coming off the press.

The last copy of your present subscription to *House & Garden* is almost ready to be mailed . . . and, unless we hear from you very soon, we'll have to cross your name off our list for the following one.

We wonder whether you realize how little *House & Garden* costs you when you are a regular subscriber.

By renewing your subscription for the next two years, you pay just \$2. a year—162/3 cents for each copy of *House &*

Used by permission of The Condé Nast Publications, Inc.

THE LETTER AND THE SALESMAN 429

Garden . . surely, a worthwhile expenditure for all its distinguished beauty and its invaluable technical information.

Consider what you spend on your house in one year alone . . . new paint, perhaps—new furnishings—garden planting—various improvements.

And then remember that, for a mere \$2. yearly, *House & Garden* keeps you up-to-date on all the new developments and shows you how to get the most in value and beauty for every penny that you spend.

Right now . . . before we have to do the fatal crossing-out . . . won't you sign the acceptance in the corner and return it to us?

3

IF YOU DON'T recognize the figure at the left, let me inform you that it's supposed to be our old Greek friend, Mr. Diogenes, engaged in one of his historic quests for an honest man!

THOUGH NOT EQUIPPED with lanterns, there are hosts of people who, today, are similarly engaged.

THEY'RE SEARCHING for reliable real estate brokers!

YOUR READIEST, most convincing recommendation to this large and eager group of prospective home-buyers and builders is through the *House & Garden* Real Estate Department.

IT WILL GIVE you unequalled prestige with the 113,000 readers of the magazine—12,500 of whom have indicated their intention to buy or build within the next 12 to 18 months.

RATES AND OTHER information are given on the back of this letter. Turn it over while you have it in hand, fill out the order blank, and send it to us with your copy before April 27, the closing date for the June issue.

4

Do you know the talk of the town . . .

. . . the private lives of European dictators . . . qualifications of Hayes, Cornell, and Fontanne for the acting championship . . . sparks from the pens of writers like Paul Gallico and Patience Abbe . . . Paris gone Socialist . . . race horses . . . radio doubles for the great . . . ?

Have you heard about . . .

. . . bottillions and stove pipes . . . glass moulding for wall decoration . . . how to cure yourself of "nerves" . . . bullfrog green, acorn brown, salmon red . . . ?

Did you see . . .

. . . Les girls of the Music Hall . . . the reproductions of modern American art . . . the new sensation of British cinema . . . the delightful satires-without-words drawn by Vertes . . . photographs by Steichen, Bruehl, Horst . . . ?

It all boils down to just one question—Have you seen the latest *Vogue*? If you have, you can take care of yourself in any company. If you haven't . . . well, the less said, the better.

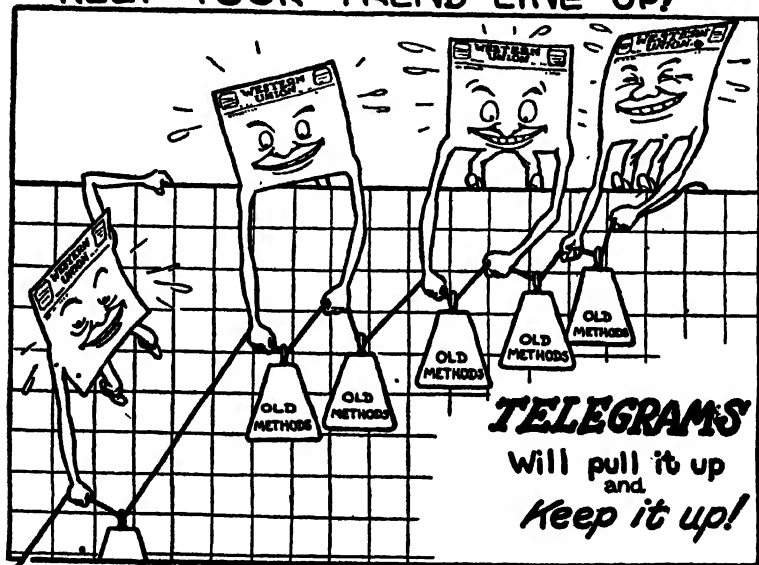
Honestly now . . . haven't you found these recent issues of *Vogue* incorporating *Vanity Fair* unusually beautiful and stimulating? Aren't they the world's best antidote to creeping vegetation?

Your subscription expires with the next issue. Act now—and you won't lose contact for a single issue.

In the following letters The Western Union Telegraph Company makes two strong appeals to business. The half-page letterhead cartoons arrest and hold attention.⁹

1

KEEP YOUR TREND LINE UP!



The "ups-and-downs" of business, particularly on the "downs" side, are always cause for concern. How to turn the trend line permanently up is the burning question. More sales are the essence of the matter.

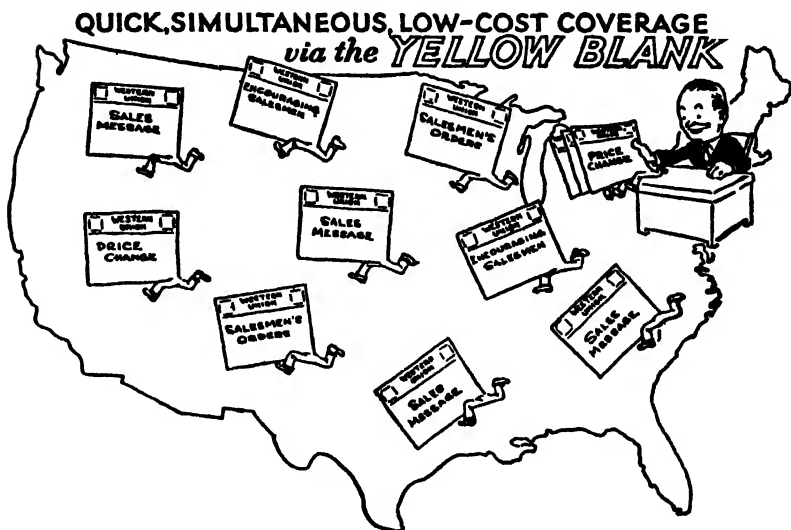
⁹ Used by permission of The Western Union Telegraph Company.

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and the telegram will help you make them. Use it to quote prices and beat competition, also to obtain credit information quickly, and to acknowledge first orders which, because of the interest displayed, will tend to build good will.

Warmed-over ideas are inert. Keep your prospects and customers interested and enthusiastic between salesmen's calls by means of the attention-compelling yellow blank. A timely and well-worded follow-up of sales calls is, in many cases, essential to get the business. Many have found that the telegram is the best vehicle. May we call to demonstrate this?

2



The meeting of competition necessitates getting in touch with customers quickly and simultaneously about price changes, improvements in products, and other matters of interest and importance. It also requires prompt and frequent contact with salesmen while on the road. The telegraph is the speediest and most convenient as well as the most economical method by which this can be done. When the same message is to be sent to more than one person, you need only to give us the text and a list of addresses. Ninety per cent of the places in the country served by telegraph are served by Western Union alone.

The yellow blank not only commands attention and makes a deep impression but it likewise presents your communication in written form so that it can be duly pondered and its import fully absorbed. This advantage inherent in the telegraph is not found in any other form of quick and dependable communication. Use the yellow blank and avoid possible misunderstandings.

It is based upon two simple steps:

- 1 appraising the exact value of those paper records
- 2 properly assuring them against loss or damage

May I call to give you details?

3

No need of reminding you of the old adage! As a buyer of office supplies, you know that pennies saved do grow into dollars. And we all surely appreciate our dollars!

This principle, however, applies even to such an inexpensive item as file folders. Our new "Remcraft," for example, wears three times as long as an ordinary folder, and costs no more. That's a mighty interesting economy.

But the "Remcraft" is also a folder stiff enough to stand erect without sagging in a file. Its darker color prevents easy soiling. Its reinforced tab saves half the space occupied by a folder of equal wearing strength.

You can use folders like "Remcraft"! We'll send you a sample—of Remcraft, or any others suggested in the coupon below—if you will check it, sign it, and drop it in the mail.

4

It's night. You're looking for 115 Bryant Street. You park, leave the car, creep stealthily to the door of "121," apologize, finally arrive at the house you seek.

Is it "night" in your files? Are your guides, filing "signposts," slowing up reference, causing costly mistakes?

How long is it since you replaced your guides?

Do you know that guides can be perfectly "tailored" to the file you use—alphabetic, geographic, date, number, subject?

This "tailoring" also includes the material of which guides are made. You may have a cheap guide for a temporary file—or an indestructible "Armorclad" for use forever.

Check over the list in the coupon below. Mail it to us and we shall submit samples that apply to conditions varying from your company's general files to an accumulation in the drawer of a desk.

5

You've lost a letter—an important one? It's apt to cost you a hundred dollars or more unless it is found? The letter was filed? No one has seen it since?

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Perhaps your files lack "control." Several things can happen to a letter after it is dispatched to the files. But most errors and delays can be definitely stopped.

How nearly up to date, then, are you on these filing "control" devices?

- 1 Pre-sorting
- 2 Follow-up
- 3 Charging "out"
- 4 Cross reference
- 5 Special classification

Control Through Files, our recent booklet on this phase of office operation, may contain the very suggestion you need to prevent losses from filing mistakes. If you will check, sign, and mail the coupon below, we shall get your copy to you at once.

This letter was entitled Cold Logic. It was printed on cellophane and clipped over a sheet of white paper. The picture of a blue-white cake of ice was carried at the top of the letter.¹⁴

It is not hard to see through this letter. Neither is it hard to see through the special "bargains" and camouflaged price cutting so common these days in all kinds of enterprise.

If our only interest were to make a quick profit and then go out of business, we too might do some price cutting at the expense of quality. We might even be tempted to sell some lemons as did the Egyptian described in the attached parable.

But we hope to be dealing with you long after this present flurry has been forgotten. We know that if we sold you rubber goods that made for appearance rather than durability—if we put price ahead of quality—our relationship would soon end.

A good name is the backbone of any business—yours, ours, and the other fellow's. Merchandise that sends your trade down the street, injures your good name as well as ours.

With so much price pressure being brought against merchants and manufacturers today, it takes nerve to hold fast to the principles upon which our business, and your business, have prospered and grown. It takes nerve to forego what seems such an easy profit, at a time when every penny counts.

But we cannot afford to forget that every dollar of tainted profit which we sacrifice now, is an investment in keeping our good names clean. In the years to come this investment will come back to both of us a thousandfold.

When one of your customers begins to harp on prices, you might care to give him the *Parable of the Wise Buyer*. Just say the word, and we'll be glad to send you one hundred copies.

¹⁴ Used by permission of The Dartnell Corporation.

*"Lives of great men all remind us"—a message to salesmen on Lincoln's birthday—can be made a real challenge to increased sales.*¹⁵

This month we celebrate again the birthday of the one man who has always seemed to us most to deserve first place in the heart of every true American. Other leaders have come to serve our country, but Abraham Lincoln—honest Abe—is the greatest of them all.

From his many rugged qualities, we can choose one which every salesman needs. Lincoln did not try to crash through obstacles by sheer, blundering force. He looked ahead. He thought hard. He knew that before action there must be a plan.

It has been truly said that great battles are won first in the minds of generals. You salesmen can afford to think about that. Salesmanship is not a question of hit and miss, of trial and error, of luck, of accident, or of "getting the breaks."

You need to plan each day's work, to plan your interviews, to plan how you will meet objections, to plan what you are going to do next week, next month, this year. You need to budget your time, to chart your course, to know where you are going.

Lincoln had foresight. You must have foresight. Without foresight no man can hope to succeed.

*The sales manager has a heart-to-heart talk with one of his salesmen:*¹⁵

Two candles, Jack—the old year and the new!

There isn't much that we can do about one of them. A year ago, it was tall and straight, and it stood for a lot of things we meant to do. But it's almost gone now. The resolutions that we made have been either gained or broken. There are no second chances in time's passing. The wick of your life, like that of the candle, is each day shorter than the day before.

Well, that would be rather sad to think about, if it were not for this other candle—the one that we are about to light. There is new hope, new challenge, in that candle, Jack. It can be made to mean so much more to us than the last one. We shouldn't be very wise if we didn't make this year better than the last one, for surely as life goes on we must learn to profit by our mistakes and grow stronger.

You know how I feel about you—that there isn't anything I wouldn't do to help make the coming year of lasting value in your life. I think you must feel the same way about me. We have gone along together so long—there is a comradeship in our work which could not easily be broken. So I won't talk any more about this new

¹⁵ Used by permission of The Dartnell Corporation.

THE LETTER AND THE SALESMAN 441

candle, except to give you my sincere and eager wish that when it, too, is burned away, you will have enjoyed all that the world has to give a true and loyal soldier.

And with this letter, Jack, I am sending you a little book published especially for salesmen by The Dartnell Corporation in Chicago. It's just the size to fit in your vest pocket, and you'll find it a regular storehouse of information you need—and for the records you have to keep.

In the front part of this book is a rating chart—a practical means for you to weigh your strength and weakness. Once in a while, you know, it pays to take inventory—of our own personal assets and liabilities, as well as of the more material things in business. I want you to take this chart seriously, Jack, because it can have a lot to say about the way the new year's candle is going to burn for you.

Your candle and mine, Jack! Let's lift it so high that it will become a blazing torch to light the path of new achievements—for us personally, and for the company we are joined in serving.

*The wise executive seeks an occasional good-will customer contact apart from the routine of daily business. Letters like this serve the same purpose as institutional advertising:*¹⁶

Now and then, we like to salute our friends with no other motive than to give a word of greeting, and to tell them how much they mean to our business. And could there be a better time to do this than on the birthday of our first president, George Washington?

In spite of all the stories which have been told about him that the historians now say were not true—like the one about the cherry tree—the fact remains beyond question that this man was heart and soul for his fellow men. The service which he rendered our republic, and his reputation for honest dealing have placed him on a pedestal which will forever endure.

In these days of mugwumping, vote grabbing, chiseling, and insincerity—too often characteristic of political leaders—it is an inspiration to think of George Washington, and to realize that all these years his reputation has stood unsullied.

Is there after all any more priceless asset to man or business than the building of a reputation for unselfish service? We don't think so, and you don't either. There may be quicker ways to make money, ways to hedge and cheat, but we want none of them. We must meet you, day by day, with the reputation for honest dealing and dependable products.

It has been good to trade with you these past years—good to know you. We hope that together we may go along blessed with the reputation for fair play and absolute dependability.

¹⁶ Used by permission of The Dartnell Corporation.

This letter novelty for seasonal promotion was successful because of both picture and content interest.¹⁷

*
* *
* *
* *
*

My dear
Santa Claus!
We do not want
to appear selfish,
but there is one limb
on the Christmas tree
that we just purchased that sticks way out
beyond the rest and we
thought it would be very nice
if you would notify each and
every one of our agents and
brokers to hang one application on
that limb before the sixteenth of this
month. You see, that is the date on
which we close our books for the year; and
so we want to close them with a GREAT
***** BIG SATISFACTORY BANG *****

Scattered around our Christmas Tree we shall have
Merry Christmas and Most Profitable New Year Greet-
ings for all our friends. We want to assure them that we
are ready to serve them in every way possible during the
***** new year and through years to come *****

Very
truly
yours

ACCIDENT AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT

¹⁷ Used by permission of the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company.

*The following sales solicitation was written by Mr. Elbert Hubbard II:*¹⁸

Once there was a man who mixed sawdust with the meal that he fed his hens. He thought they would never know the difference. But they got even! When the man set the eggs, half the brood hatched were woodpeckers.

Nothing but the genuine goes. Our furniture is as good as can be made. It has style, finish, personality. If you think of furnishing a room roycroftie, write us for a catalog and tell us your wants.

Inasmuch as the following letter—in which “the eminent dramatist Brown sells an idea to the eminent novelist Snooks”—was written almost one hundred years ago, its modernity of subject and treatment is noteworthy. It is taken from William Makepeace Thackeray’s “Burlesques” which like his “Fitzboodle Papers” and other casual contributions to Fraser’s Magazine and The Cornhill Magazine, are too little read today. Thackeray’s tongue-in-cheek humor is nowhere more delightful than in such short odds and ends as this letter represents.

I am on the lookout here for materials for original comedies such as those lately produced at your theatre; and, in the course of my studies, I have found something, my dear Snooks, which I think will suit your book. You are bringing, I see, your admirable novel *The Mysteries of May Fair*, to an end (by the way, the scene of the two-hundredth number, between the Duke and his grandmother, and the Jesuit butler, is one of the most harrowing and exciting I ever read) and, of course, you must turn your real genius to some other channel; and we may expect that your pen shall not be idle.

The original plan I have to propose to you, then, is taken from the French, just like the original dramas above mentioned; and, indeed, I found it in the law report of the *National* newspaper, and a French literary gentleman, M. Emanuel Gonzales, has the credit of the invention. He and an advertisement agent fell out about a question of money; the affair was brought before the courts, and the little plot so got wind. But there is no reason why you should not take the plot and act on it yourself. You are a known man, the public relishes your works; anything bearing the name of Snooks is eagerly read by the masses; and though Messrs. Hookey of Holywell Street pay you handsomely, I make no doubt you would like to be rewarded at a still higher figure.

Unless he writes with a purpose, you know, a novelist in our days is good for nothing. This one writes with a socialist purpose; that with a conservative purpose. This author or authoress, with the most delicate skill, insinuates Catholicism into you, and you find yourself in the third volume all but a Papist; another doctors you with Low Church remedies, to work inwardly upon you, and you

¹⁸ Used by permission of Mr. Elbert Hubbard II.

swallow down unsuspectingly as children do calomel in jelly. Fiction advocates all sorts of truth and causes: doesn't the delightful bard of the Minorities find Moses in everything? M. Gonzales's plan, the one I recommend to my dear Snooks, simply was to write an advertisement novel. Look over *The Times* or the directory, walk down Regent Street or Fleet Street any day—see what houses advertise most, and put yourself into communication with their proprietors. With your rings, your chains, your studs, and the tip on your chin, I don't know any greater swell than Bob Snooks. Walk into the shops, I say; ask for the principal, and introduce yourself, saying, "I am the great Snooks. I am the author of *The Mysteries of May Fair*. My weekly sale is 281,000. I am about to produce a new work called *The Palaces of Pimlico* or *The Curse of the Court*, describing and lashing fearlessly the vices of the aristocracy. This book will have a sale of at least 530,000; it will be on every table—in the boudoir of the pampered duke, as in the chamber of the honest artisan. The myriads of foreigners who are coming to London, and are anxious to know about our national manners, will purchase my book and carry it to their distant homes. So, Mr. Taylor, or Mr. Haberdasher, or Mr. Jeweler, how much will you stand if I recommend you in my forthcoming novel?"

You may make a noble income in this way, Snooks. For instance, suppose it is an upholsterer. What more easy, what more delightful, than the description of upholstery? As thus:

"Lady Emily was reclining on one of Down and Eider's voluptuous ottomans, the only couch on which Belgravian beauty now reposes, when Lord Bathershins entered, stepping noiselessly over one of Tomkins's elastic Axminster carpets. 'Good heavens, my lord!' she said—and the lovely creature fainted. The Earl rushed to the mantelpiece, where he saw a flacon of Otto's eau-de-Cologne—and so forth.

Or say it's a cheap furniture shop; it may be brought in just as easily. As thus:

"We are poor, Eliza," said Harry Hardhand, looking affectionately at his wife, "but we have enough, love, have we not, for our humble wants? The rich and luxurious may go to Dillow's or Gobiggin's, but we can get our rooms comfortably furnished at Timmonson's for £20." And putting on her bonnet, and hanging affectionately on her husband, the stoker's pretty bride tripped gaily to the well-known mart, where Timmonson, with his usual affability, was ready to receive them.

Then you might have a touch at the wine-merchant and purveyor: "Where did you get this delicious claret, or *pâté de foies gras*, or what you please?" said Count Blagowski to the gay young Sir Horace Swellmore. The voluptuous Bart answered, "At So-and-so's or So-and-so's." The answer is obvious. You may furnish your cellar or your larder in this way. Begad, Snooks! I lick my lips at the very idea!

Then, as to tailors, milliners, bootmakers, etc., how easy to get a word for them! "Amramson, the tailor, waited upon Lord Paddington with an assortment of his unrivaled waistcoats," or "Clad in that

simple but aristocratic style of which Schneider *alone* has the secret." "Parvy Newcome really looked like a gentleman, and though corpulent and crooked, Schneider had managed to give him," and so forth. Don't you see what a stroke of business you might do in this way? The shoemaker—"Lady Fanny flew, rather than danced, across the ballroom; only a *sylphide*, or Taglioni, or a lady *chaussée'd* by Chevillett of Bond Street, could move in that fairy way."

The hairdresser—"Count Barbarossa is seventy years of age," said the Earl. "I remember him at the Congress of Vienna, and he has not a single gray hair." Wiggins laughed. "My good Lord Baldock," said the old wag, "I saw Barbarossa's hair coming out of Ducroissant's shop, and under his valet's arm—ho! ho! ho!"—and the two *bon-vivants* chuckled as the Count passed by, talking with, etc., etc., etc.

The gunmaker—"The antagonists faced each other, and undismayed before his gigantic enemy, Kilconnel raised his pistol. It was one of Clicker's manufacture, and Sir Marmaduke knew he could trust the maker and the weapon. "One, two, *three!*" cried O'Tool, and the two pistols went off at that instant, and uttering a terrific curse, the life-guardsmen," etc. A sentence of this nature from your pen, my dear Snooks, would, I should think, bring a case of pistols and a double-barreled gun to your lodgings; and, though heaven forbid you should use such weapons, you might sell them, you know, and we could make merry with the proceeds.

If my hint is of any use to you, it is quite at your service, dear Snooks; and should anything come of it, I hope you will remember

Your friend,

WORK

- 1 A large department shop announces a midwinter sale of heavy coats for both men and women. This sale will continue for one week only, but during this particular week the shop will open its doors at seven a.m. and close them at seven p.m., in order to give business men and women an opportunity to buy before and after regulation office hours. Coats of all kinds and for all cold-weather uses are to be sold. Prices have been "slashed." Write a letter to be sent to credit customers, telling them among other things that they will be admitted to the special sale three days earlier than the general public.
- 2 The new unbreakable pliable glass has met with tremendous success in most fields of business and industry. A sales campaign is now to be made to introduce it in the home. You are asked to write a letter suitable for circulation among housewives the country over, but you must address it, of course, to one particular housewife, drawing upon your imagination for name and address. Pliable glass comes in sheets of any size, thickness, color, and degree of transparency. It is pliable as putty. Any one can bend and twist it into shape, and then unbend and untwist it into the original sheet or into any other shape. It can be used for containers of all kinds, useful in the kitchen and ornamental in the living room. Your

company issues a booklet of directions for making a hundred-and-one different household articles. Sheets of this glass may be had with quicksilver backing, and may thus be used as mirrors. Pa can fold it around his physiognomy when he shaves, and get east, south, and west views simultaneously. And Ma and the girls will find it priceless for make-up purposes. But these are details. The price per sheet is nominal for introduction. You enclose a small novelty in your letter—a short pliable glass ruler that may be used as a thimble, as a pin tray, as a candlestick, as a napkin-ring, and so forth. The leaflet in which it is wrapped illustrates the versatility of this little ruler.

- 3 You are the proprietor, we shall say, of a beautiful vacation spot about fifty miles outside a large city. It has every imaginable sport and recreation advantage. It is high in location, with magnificent views, and it is easy of access by trains, motors, and airplanes. (Other special features may be added.) Write letters to classified groups—teachers, doctors, business men, college students and their families—pointing out the extraordinary beauties of your place, its inexpensiveness, its superior food and water and air, and so forth, and offering special rates for parties of a certain size for a certain length of visit. You are able to offer special railway rates; your motors meet some trains fifteen miles out of the city traffic; the new air field is only ten miles from you and your motors meet all planes. You are privileged to enclose a folder in which sportsmen and physicians of prominence recommend your center with great enthusiasm.
- 4 The new television equipment attachable to the ordinary radio set is now ready, we shall assume, for use in the home and in hotel rooms. Prices range from twenty-five dollars to more than a thousand a unit, and service is furnished for one year from date of purchase. By use of the Touch-and-Go Television Unit you may see a speaker to whom you listen on the radio, you may see a friend or relative as he talks to you from a distance by telephone, and sitting or lying comfortably in your home or in a hotel room you may see all sorts of demonstrations—parades, assemblages, performances, whatnot—in all parts of the country. Write two strong sales appeals, one for hotel managements and one for private homes. Accompany your sales appeals with diagrams and illustrations, with testimonials from prominent people, and with tabular price lists.
- 5 Let it be assumed that you are going into partnership with two other people in the establishment of a first-class restaurant in the better section of your community. You plan to cater to business and professional men and women, and to make a specialty of club luncheons and banquets of all sorts. You have taken an entire building and equipped it for the accommodation of large numbers. You are going to provide not only the best of food and drink, but also quiet and dignified atmosphere in which respectable people may enjoy meeting and taking their meals in congenial and tasteful leisure. Prepare a letter to be sent to two thousand business and professional men and women in the community, in which you point out the merits of your new place. Write a letter to the seventy-five clubs or societies in the community, setting forth in

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detail the arrangements you are able to make for special luncheons and banquets. Your letterhead should, of course, carry the attractive name of the restaurant and your letter proper should mention all the attractive features that you are able to offer.

- 6 The Juvenile Merchandising Corporation, 125 State Street, Chicago, Illinois, is planning to take under control all the school and college cooperative shops in the country and to make of them one large chain, cooperative concern for the benefit of students of all grades of learning. To this end it has appointed certain young people to report on the school shops in various communities. On the basis of these reports it will organize and conduct its huge undertaking. You have been appointed, let us say, to report on your community. Write your letter-report to the Juvenile Merchandising Corporation, covering, among other points, the number of shops investigated, the average size of these shops, their average number of customers, their average turnover, the character and classification of their merchandise, the price economies made possible by large and well-managed organization, their employment service and equipment. You must, of course, make certain imaginative assumptions but always logical ones. Tabular set-up must be used to some extent. The letter picture must be complete and harmonious.
- 7 Let it be assumed that you are a road salesman for a large wholesale concern. You have just returned, let us say, from an extended trip over the country and your sales manager expects a report in writing from you. Reproduce this report (or a section of it) covering such points as the following: your route, sales made to old customers, new sales fields developed, fluctuating status of trade in various sections, impressions of business in general, conditions in your business in particular, activities of your competitors in territories visited, outlook for future expansion, advice as to advertising and direct-mail especially at local points as tie-ups with visiting salesmen, comment upon branch depots or centers, criticism (favorable or unfavorable) of retail handling of your line here and there, replenishment of stocks at one point and another, efficiency of personnel as you have observed it, follow-ups (mail and otherwise) of your visit at certain places. Any commodity or service at all with which you are in any way familiar may be taken for this project. Your manager will, of course, want a strictly step-by-step development in this report, and he will probably welcome running or marginal headlines by way of clarifying your exposition.
- 8 Your concern, let us say, is a manufacturing distributor of household goods. It is constantly improving old utensilry and inventing new, and the average housewife is always curious and often enthusiastic about its output. The employees, including direct dealers, number about fifteen thousand. Business is confined chiefly to the territory east of the Mississippi and north of the Mason and Dixon Line, tho it is rapidly expanding as result of aggressive campaigning. Demand for your commodities is steadily increasing in old territory and you are very often unable to supply the demand for "new issues" without requiring factories to work on double and sometimes triple shifts. But there is some unrest among the em-

ployees in the manufacturing plants, and dealers in many places are dissatisfied with your service and with your selling terms. Your house has never had a good, constructive, comprehensive organ, though it has at irregular intervals in the past issued individual plant-news sheets. It is now clear to the executives that a good, regularly issued, judiciously edited house organ can be made to do much toward building company unity and *esprit de corps* as well as toward getting dealers into solid-line support and cooperation. You have been called upon to supervise the first issue of this new organ. (1) Give it a good title. (2) Indicate the table of contents and the general layout of the first issue. (3) Write a strong appeal to appear editorially in this first issue, urging everybody connected with the concern to do one deed toward promotion—if only to speak a few enthusiastic words every day for the next month. (4) Explain in some article, prominently placed, details in regard to sales premiums to be allotted hereafter, in regard to improvements and additions in service, and in regard to new provisions for employees' insurance and vacation arrangements.

- 9 As a member of the copy department of the Atkins Advertising Agency you have been assigned the task of preparing copy for a four-side "window-prop" setting forth irrefutable reasons why everybody should stop and examine and eventually buy the new Asbestos Match. This is the latest thing in safety matches. (The law forbids the manufacture and distribution in the United States of the Canadian and European wax-stemmed match, the use and purpose of which are similar.) The sulfur point is somewhat longer and fuller than that on the ordinary match and the stem is made of asbestos. When the point is consumed the light is automatically extinguished. In addition, this match is ignited, not by the customary (and damaging) strike or scratch, but by a sharp twist or turn on any hard surface. Containers are made of asbestos and have somewhere on them a "spot" for lighting purposes. Asbestos Matches are made in all styles and sizes. They are recommended by the large tobacco companies, by fire-safety organizations, by city fire departments, by forest-fire fighters, and by many other individuals and groups. The present promotional campaign includes concurrent newspaper and magazine advertising, bill-board and poster advertising, window displays, and demonstrations. A window-prop will stand in a window as result of two wide accordion pleats or folds. All four sides may thus be seen at once. Prepare this copy, keeping in mind the expository character of all business writing that introduces a new or improved necessity to the public. Attractive expository display is likewise necessary. One page of this publicity piece must consist of excerpts from testimonial letters written by authoritative people or organizations. It is to be distributed by the manufacturer or the wholesaler to different kinds of retailers—stationers, druggists, tobacconists, and so forth.

- 10 You are asked to write a defense of the slogan ADVERTISING PAYS. Just what does this slogan mean? Does it mean that it pays the advertiser or the consumer or the medium (newspaper, magazine, or other) in which advertising is placed, or all three? Show how it pays one or more or all of these. Mass or quantity production is said to be one thing that tends to reduce prices. Wholesale dis-

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tribution is said to be another. But some people contend that quantity production and wholesale distribution make for lower standards of quality. And, then, you of course know the argument to the effect that mass production and country-wide distribution, as the result of advertising, bring about not only lower prices for the consumer but greater profits for the retailer and manufacturer. This seems like a paradox, doesn't it? But perhaps you can explain this principle in business—and defend it. At any rate, you must be very logical in attempting to discuss it, and this, in turn, means that you must build a good sequential outline before you attempt to do any solid paragraph-by-paragraph writing. By the way, give your theme a good headline with phrasal finality.

- 11 Let it be assumed that your school has workshops in many different types of handicraft. The output of these various shops is to be placed on exhibition-sale during a certain week, and parents and others are to be invited in to see the work as well as to buy the articles on exhibition. Prepare an invitation-sales circular to be broadcast. It should contain pictures of some of the articles offered; others should be described as for a sales catalog, with numbers, prices, and keys for location—rooms, tables, positions on tables. Color should be used for ingratiating the circular, and decorative designs should be laid out for successive pages or parts in the presentation. Related articles should be grouped and headlined, and otherwise unified. The circular should be so devised that it may be tacked up as a poster, placed on a table at the school entrance, and by means of a novelty fold enclosed in the ordinary four-by-nine-and-a-half commercial envelope.
- 12 As a member of the publicity department of the Harriman Haberdashery Houses, Incorporated, you have been asked by your department manager to prepare competitive copy for a four-page leaflet to be broadcast thru the mails and from the counters of more than one hundred shops the country over. This leaflet is to be in four colors, with illustrations, typographical display, and quality make-up in general. Prices are not to be mentioned in this piece of publicity, but style and service and satisfaction are to be emphasized. One page of the leaflet is to carry a testimonial letter from a prominent person who has dealt with your shops in several places. Another page is to be given over to a general credit-invitation letter explaining your unusual credit arrangements for new customers. The complete picture is to be an irresistible appeal by way of business exposition and technical presentation—an appeal that will retain old custom with renewed enthusiasm and that will create new custom from all walks of life and from practically all classes of income. Reproduce the copy that you prepare for your manager—and that wins you promotion in the department as result of high-percentage returns.
- 13 It is frequently contended, especially by those of the academic and classical tradition, that there is no such thing as business English, that "English is English" (pure or impure as the case may be) and that to teach English as a "tool of trade" is, on the part of the teacher, to descend to the realm of the sordid or the commonplace. "So-called business English," they say, "is just another question-

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